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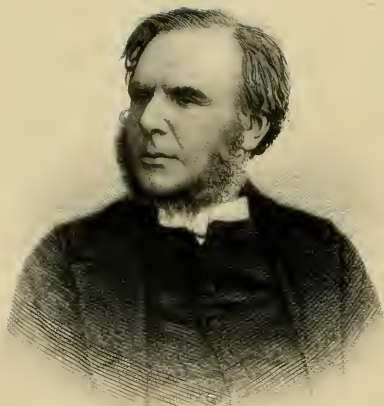
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SELECT REMAINS

OF

ISLAY BURNS, D.D.

OF THE FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW.

EDITED BY

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WITH MEMOIR BY

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PREFACE.

THE appearance of this volume is due to a general expression of desire, on the part of those who esteemed and loved Dr Islay Burns, to have some permanent memorial of his work, as a Preacher and as a Lecturer. What he was as an Author, his published works remain to bear witness ; but it seemed desirable that, along with his more elaborate literary compositions, there should be associated some of those oral addresses, whether from the pulpit or the chair, which were listened to with interest and profit when he delivered them ; and which might serve to recall, more vividly than aught else, his genial presence and *personnel*, now that he is gone.

In selecting the twelve Sermons which form the first part of the volume, the difficulty usually experienced in similar cases has been increased by two circumstances ; —the one, that very many of those which seemed most fitted for publication had been preached as parts of a series, and were therefore somewhat fragmentary ; and

the other, that among those which were self-contained and complete, there seemed to be such a uniformity of general excellence as to prompt the wish, rather than reject any, to admit all. The number of carefully-prepared, fully written-out discourses, which the author left behind him, is very great;—and considering what an amount of labour the mere act of writing involved to him, (more than it could do to any one not entirely blind) serves to exemplify the beautiful conscientiousness with which he went about his ministerial work, allowing nothing whatever to interfere with the pulpit and its paramount claims. Those that have been chosen, it is hoped—though not better than others, and for that very reason—may afford a fair representation of his ordinary Sabbath-day ministrations, and will doubtless revive, in some instances, the memory of pleasant Sacramental seasons at Dundee, at Kilsyth, at Kirkliston, in Glasgow, and elsewhere, where they are known to have been specially relished and enjoyed, for their sweet seasonableness.

The Lectures have been selected, without difficulty, from among the author's other College preparations, as being in a manner complete in themselves—embracing a distinct branch of Theological inquiry, and seeming fitted to meet a present want. Forming part, originally, of his course as Professor of Apologetic Theology, they were delivered in their present “popular” form during

the winter of 1871-2, to a large audience of the young men of Glasgow, by whom they were much appreciated.

Of the two Essays reproduced, the first, on the "Unity of the Church," is that referred to in p. xxviii. of the Memoir; and the second, "Oxford and Rome," is one of those admirable papers which appeared from time to time in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, which is thought to be not unworthy of preservation in its present more durable form, as it is, certainly, not yet unneeded, or out of date.

The "Memoir" prefixed, alike truthful and tasteful, from the pen of Professor Blaikie, adds another to the many acts of kindness by which the family and friends of Dr Burns have been laid under obligations to him, more than words can express.

In preparing the volume for the press, I have been largely indebted to the advice and assistance of the Rev. W. R. Taylor, Dr Burns' pastor and friend; and the selection agreed on between us has received the cordial *imprimatur* of Professor Douglas, his esteemed colleague in the Free Church College, Glasgow.

J. C. B.

KIRKLISTON, 5th February 1874.

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MEMOIR.*

ISLAY BURNS was born at the manse of Dun, in Forfarshire, on the 16th January 1817. He was the sixth child of the Rev. William Hamilton Burns, D.D., who was then minister of Dun, but was translated four years afterwards to Kilsyth, near Glasgow, with which place his name became connected so closely, that "Burns of Kilsyth," was long a kind of household word. In his life of his brother William, Islay Burns has so graphically and beautifully painted both the place of their birth, and the sanctuary of their home, that we make no apology for the copious extract which follows, applicable as it is, in almost every particular, to both brothers:—

"It was a quiet and gentle spot, full of stillness and peace, nestling, with the adjoining church and graveyard, close within the bosom of a romantic dell, amid the shadows of ancient trees and the hoarse chorus of rooks high overhead, which seemed rather to increase than to break the silence. A little beyond, reached by a rustic bridge across an arm of the ravine, was the gray mansion-house of the Erskines, with its antique garden and bowling-green and smooth-shaven lawn, carrying back the thoughts into the far past, as associated in popular tradition with stories of "the good Superintendent" and the brave John Knox. With this tranquil scene, little suggestive of profound spiritual experiences or intense moral struggles, were his earliest memories linked. To the neighbouring cathedral city of Brechin, too, of which a paternal uncle was then minister, and which by the

* Enlarged from a paper in the *Sunday Magazine*, September 1872.

continual coming and going of cousins and common friends had become to us as another home, our thoughts in after-days often recurred—with the fine old church and churchyard, and the castle steep and the castle pool, and the quaint streets, and the fair sunny gardens, and the scarlet-vested town's officers, the objects to us of continual wonderment ; and chief of all, the reverend face and form of the good pastor, whose very look was a benediction,—all bright for ever in the golden light of childhood.

“ In his sixth year, however, all this was left behind, and became as the dreamy reminiscence of a bygone world. In the year 1821, his father was translated to a wider and more stirring sphere, where the family life developed itself henceforth under intenser and more stimulating influences. The village of Kilsyth, situated about twelve miles east of Glasgow, at the foot of an undulating range of picturesque green hills, the gentler continuation of the more rugged Campsie Fells, contains a mixed population of hand-loom weavers, colliers, and shopkeepers, which numbered at that time about 3000 souls, and formed the centre of a parish which in its landward part contained about 2000 more. Here the wheels of life moved more swiftly. There was a greater stir of mind, greater variety of interests, greater impetus and force of existence every way, intellectual, moral, social. The chatting groups in the market-place and at the street corners, the merry song often sustained in full chorus, blending with the sound of the shuttle in the long loom-shops, the keen party politics and the strong and even bitter denominational sympathies, the eager and sometimes little-ceremonious canvassings of ministers and sermons, the collisions and mutual jealousies of class and class, with all the other well-known incidents of a south-country weaving village in the neighbourhood of a great industrial and commercial centre, formed altogether a scene in strong contrast to the still life of our former home. A little to the south of this little busy hive, and separated from it only by a narrow valley, stands the manse, with its sheltering thicket of planes and beeches, and commanding an extensive and beautiful prospect not only of the village and the hills, but over a long strath, level as the sea, to the far west, where the blue summit of Goatfell can be dimly descried from the parlour window in a clear day.

“ Here our second home was established, and our deepest and most lasting home affections nurtured. It was to us a sacred and blessed spot in every sense, full of quiet pleasures, healthy activities, and gentle charities—a manse home, and a manse home of the best type,

in which cheerful piety, quiet thoughtfulness, and a modest and reverend dignity of speech and carriage, formed together the purest element in which the young life could develop itself and receive its first impressions of truth and duty. Here of course, as elsewhere, it was the parent that made the home, and in this respect I think we were happy beyond the lot of most. Our father, gentle, reverend, gracious, full of kind thoughts, devout affections, and fresh genial sympathies—serious without moroseness, cheerful and even sometimes gay without lightness, zealous, diligent, conscientious without a touch of impetuous haste, and carrying about with him withal an atmosphere of calm repose and staid, measured dignity, which in these bustling days is becoming increasingly rare—he was the very model of a type of the Christian pastorate which is fast passing away ; the father alike and the friend of his whole parish, and the loving centre of everything kind and good and true that is passing within its bounds. To him our mother was in some respects the direct counterpart. Of a nimble, buoyant, active frame, alike of body and mind, she was all light and life and motion, and was as it were the glad sunshine and bright angel of a house which had been otherwise too still and sombre. There was not in those days under their roof much direct and systematic home education. The influence and teaching of the place was rather felt, or experienced without being felt, than visibly obtruded and pressed upon us.

“My father’s government was rather calm and strong, than bustling and energetic ; he was a regulating and steadying power, rather than a busy executive. He was, in short, felt rather as a presence than seen as an agency ; the element in which we lived, the atmosphere which we breathed day by day ; something, in short, which was as it were presupposed, and in its silent influence entered into everything that was thought, felt, planned, enjoyed, or suffered within our little world. We were not often or much with him, not so much, I think, as would as a general thing be desirable. His calm and unimpulsive temperament here, as elsewhere, fitted him to act rather by continuous influence, than by distinct and specific efforts. A casual rencounter in the garden walk or in the harvest field ; a forenoon drive to some neighbouring manse or country house ; half an hour’s private reading with his boys in the study before breakfast ; above all, the Sabbath evening hour of catechising and prayer ; these, with now and then the reading aloud in the fireside circle of some interesting and popular volume, a task in which he greatly delighted and much excelled—were the chief occasions of

direct intercourse and influence between the father and the child. Sometimes, too, along the garden walk at eventide, or through a partition wall at midnight, the ejaculated words of secret meditation and prayer would reach our ears and hearts, like the sounding of the high-priest's bells within the veil.¹

"It was in this way that the first touch of serious thought I ever observed in my brother was brought to light. We had lain long awake in our common sleeping chamber after some months of separation, talking eagerly of all our ideas and plans of life, in which as yet God and heaven had little share, when the well-known sound from within the sanctuary was heard in the silence. He was hushed at once at least to momentary seriousness, and whispered : 'There can be no doubt where *his* heart is, and where he is going.' It was not long before the great, decisive change took place, and may possibly have been the first living seed of grace that sunk into his heart.

"But the more active management of the household and of the home education was safe in the hands of his more nimble and lively partner, who seemed made, if any one ever was, to make home and home duties happy. 'Herself the very soul of springy activity and elastic cheerfulness, she kept all around her alive and stirring ; while by the infection of her own blithesome and courageous spirit, labour became light, and duty pleasant. Never was she so much at home as when, in one of those occasional inundations of friendly kith and kin to which our large connection and central situation exposed us, the manse became too narrow for its inmates, and double-bedded rooms and extemporised shake-downs became the order of the day. Was there now and then, amid this universal quickness and alacrity, a slight tinge of sharpness in chiding the dreamy loiterer and the handless slut ? Perhaps so : yet we children scarcely saw it, to whom she ever spoke in the true mother tones of gentleness and love. From her lips and at her knees we learned our earliest lessons of truth, and in her voice and face first traced, as in a clear mirror, the lineaments of that gentle and loving godliness which hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.'² Such was the element in which my brother's earliest years were spent, and in which his first experiences of life were formed."³

¹ *The Pastor of Kilsyth* : a brief biography of Mr Burns' father, published some years ago, from which this sketch of the home life at Kilsyth is partly taken. [By Islay Burns, D.D.]

² *The Pastor of Kilsyth*.

³ *Memoir of the Rev. William C. Burns, M.A.*, pp. 1-6.

With his brother William, Islay received the earliest part of his education at the parish school of Kilsyth ; and with him also, though not at first, he went to Aberdeen to attend the grammar school, and afterwards the university there. In the memoir of his brother he has enlarged with glowing admiration, and at what might appear to some disproportionate length, on the singular benefits which his brother and he derived from the teaching of Dr Melvin, then rector of the grammar school. But every man with any understanding of the highest work of the teacher, who passed under Dr Melvin's hands, will cordially admit that neither he, nor Professor Masson whom he quotes so largely, was guilty of any exaggeration of the remarkable qualities of Dr Melvin, and the singular intellectual advantages which every competent scholar derived from his method of drill. So deeply did Islay Burns treasure what Melvin had taught him, that, a few years ago, he made great use of it in a little book on Latin Syntax, which he published for the use of students.

It was at the grammar school of Aberdeen that my acquaintance with Islay Burns began. He was a few years my senior, and we were neither class-fellows nor playmates ; but I have a vivid recollection of his appearance in the playground, careering in full swing with a peculiarly radiant countenance amid the bustling groups that thronged the narrow yard ; showing that his devotion to Melvin in no degree interfered with his enjoyment of the sport. Boys from the country who joined the rector's classes, were usually considerably behind those who had gone through the earlier classes of the school ; and the fact that Islay Burns held a high place was a decided testimony both to his diligence and his aptness to learn.

From the grammar school the two brothers passed to Marischal College and University. Here Islay Burns distinguished himself greatly. He was excellent in classics, and what was not very common either then or since, he distinguished himself equally in mathematics. It is for this department that in

recent years, when so many honours are thrown open to general competition, Aberdeen students have shown the greatest capacity. The highest honour in Marischal College was called "the mathematical bursary;" being a prize of considerable money value, the competition for it was very keen. Burns threw his whole energy into the task; but though he was successful, it cost him dear. His eyes contracted an affection called conical cornea; the sight of one was entirely lost; through great care that of the other was preserved to a limited degree,—so imperfectly, however, that when he was reading, it was necessary for him to hold his book or paper within about an inch of his face. The slow rate of progress and great physical labour which this defect entailed, made it a marvel to his friends that he persevered so earnestly with his studies, and that through life he read so much; it was a labour which few could have borne; yet we believe that no one of his friends ever heard him express the slightest impatience at the resistance which he had thus constantly to encounter in his life work,—not even when it was like to prevent him from being appointed to the great object of his desire—a professor's chair.

The two brothers, while residing in Aberdeen, were exposed to an ordeal which proves too trying to many a youth. They lived together in a quiet lodging, their own masters in the disposal both of their time and money. In one thing, however, their father was very strict. Every fortnight, an exact statement of their expenditure had to be furnished to him. Balanced to a penny, the fortnightly account was despatched with the utmost punctuality all the time they were at Aberdeen. A class-fellow of Islay Burns remembers the great strain to which his conscience was put on one occasion, when the temptation to hear Kean, who was to appear a few nights at Aberdeen, had proved too much even for the horror of the theatre with which he had grown up. The struggle turned on the question, whether the shilling spent for admission to the theatre was to be entered as such in the account to his father. It cost him a good night's sleep, but the idea of deceiving him

on such a point could not be borne; the destination of the shilling was frankly avowed.

After graduating at Marischal College, he returned home, and at the University of Glasgow began his theological studies.

It is worth while recording that in his zeal for Greek learning, he joined the Greek class then taught by the late Sir D. K. Sandford, as an extra student, and at the public competition became entitled to the highest honour, which, however, he declined to accept, from an honourable feeling that the other students had not had the same advantages.

By a sort of natural and at the same time gracious process, his mind turned to the ministry. The purpose, we mean, was not formed under any such vehement soul-struggle as that of his brother William, who, urged by the irresistible surging of the new life, left the lawyer's office in Edinburgh, and hurried on foot to Kilsyth, to tell his family that he had resolved to be a minister. Quietly and without observation, the new life had dawned in Islay, greatly to the joy of his brother, who was the first to observe it, and announce it to the family. It seemed to be an understood thing that Islay would give himself to the ministry. Clerical connections abounded in the family—many of them very strong men; three of his father's brothers were in the church, and cousins without number—including Drs David and Charles Brown, Dr Chalmers of London, Mr Burns of Kirkliston, and (by marriage) Dr Guthrie. His entrance on the service of the Church took place at a most exciting time; amid the enthusiasm of a great controversy, in which the whole force of the family connection bore like a great tide in the same direction, and amid the remarkable work of grace at Kilsyth and elsewhere, recorded by himself so fully in the memoir of his brother, who was, indeed, one of its main instruments. In these influences Islay Burns participated fully; a deeper tone was given to his piety, and the great spiritual ends of the Christian ministry were made to assume that conspicuous and commanding place which they ever after held in his regards.

Having been licensed by the Presbytery of Glasgow as a probationer, Burns was engaged for a time in mission work, in connection with the parish of St George's, Edinburgh, under the ministry of the Rev. Dr Candlish. The controversy then raging in the Church reached a very critical point, when the seven ministers of Strathbogie, who refused to obey the General Assembly, were first suspended, and then deposed from the ministry. Interdicts were issued by the Civil Court against those whom the Church sent to officiate in their room, and any one who accepted the situation of missionary in any of the parishes, forfeited by that act almost all chance of a presentation from a patron.

In 1841, Burns was appointed by the General Assembly's Committee to officiate as missionary in Botriphnie, one of the seven parishes, and quite cordially accepted the difficult position. The only letter which we have obtained, relating to this period, is more full in its description of the place than in its reference to his work. The last sentence, however, shows what kind of spirit was prevalent in his flock, and how delightful he found it to minister among a people touched with a sense of sin, and thirsting for the bread of life :—

‘ Botriphnie is situated in the picturesque and romantic valley of Strath Isla, watered by the stream of the same name, and includes the most beautiful part of that valley with the surrounding hills. As you leave Keith, proceeding by an excellent turnpike in a south-westerly direction, the valley is open, bleak, and generally uninteresting; presenting no object of any interest but the stream itself, which slowly winds down the valley, in many a graceful sweep, between banks of the richest verdure fringed with trees scattered at intervals along its sides. As you advance, however, the valley narrows and deepens, and the whole scene becomes varied and picturesque in the highest degree. The road winds along the side of the valley: the river murmurs at little distances beneath on the left; now wanders along through cultivated fields or brown heath—at other times faintly seen amid the rich foliage of the trees which here and there crowd and shade its banks. A little beyond, the hills on the other side of the valley, clad to the summits with dark forests of

fir or with brown heath, and divided at one place with a deep and dark dell branching off from the valley, close the prospect, and give that silent and intense solitude to the scene which is the main characteristic of this district.

“The place where I am stationed is about half-a-mile from the parish church in the direction of Keith, in a more open part of the valley. It is a neat and respectable cottage, occupying an elevated platform close by the public road, with a neat garden and fine trees in front. Within, all is neatness and comfort, and all domestic matters are managed with a civilised propriety and taste which would surprise you in a place like this. Within a stone cast of the house is one of the finest and perhaps the most retired and solitary walks I have ever known. You may proceed for a full mile along a nice path by the winding margin of the stream, with steep banks or rather cliffs, finely wooded to the very summits, rising abruptly all the way on the left, and with rich wooded meadows, forming the bosom of the valley, on the right. Here you may wander for months, and never meet a single passenger to break your solitude. Indeed the parish abounds with delightful walks, which I am taking full advantage of, for the benefit of my health. You will think I am spending too much time with these external details; but I write these notes once for all for the general behoof, and you may hand this letter about till all are acquainted with the scenery of Botriphnie. In other and more important matters, everything is encouraging. Last Sabbath, we had three delightful meetings. My texts forenoon and afternoon were John iii. 3, and Heb. xii. 20–29, and I enjoyed considerable liberty, especially in the morning, when my strength was fresh. There was a tenderness and solemnity visible in the congregation which is delightful and encouraging.”

In the beginning of 1843, a great cloud fell on Dundee in the premature removal of Robert Murray M'Cheyne. A generation has passed away since then, and the ever fresh odour of sanctity that continues to be emitted by his name is the best proof of the marvellous power of grace which his character exemplified. It was no easy matter to find a successor for such a man. The choice of the congregation fell on Islay Burns, and in June 1843, a month after the Disruption, he was ordained to the charge of St Peter's, which had become connected with the Free Church. It may be doubted, however, whether the

congregation in calling him, or he himself in accepting the call, knew precisely what manner of man he was. As it turned out he was not quite of the school of M'Cheyne. At first he tried to be like him, and fell into some of his special tones. But he soon found that that was a mistake, and he became himself. The mind of Burns was of a broader and more robust type than that of M'Cheyne. He did not possess the intense spirituality of his predecessor, nor his exquisitely tender, pitiful, almost weeping tone. To affect what he did not possess, whatever present popularity it might seem to bring, was a weakness from which the honest and manly heart of Islay Burns recoiled. While he was full of affection and longing for the spiritual good of his flock, and while his messages to them were delivered with an unction and a fervour that well befitted his character, he felt that the materials for their edification were to be drawn from a wider area, and that the process of their edification was to be spread over a longer period than had been present to the mind of M'Cheyne. The one was emphatically an evangelist, the other was more of a spiritual educator. The one aimed at bringing souls at once into loving fellowship with God, and his cry was ever to the wind to breathe on the dry bones; the other, with the same ultimate aim, took more pains in bringing bone to his bone, and sinew to his sinew, and in getting the flesh and skin laid over them, preparatory to their being possessed by the Spirit. In the preaching of Burns, there was more of a measured march, a formal progress, often with great beauty and richness of language, and there was less of close dealing with souls. There is no need for odious comparisons. No man would have admitted more cordially than Burns, that, viewed in itself, the rôle of M'Cheyne and of his brother William was the noblest a Christian minister could have, and implied a measure of devotedness and close fellowship with the Master, as beautiful as rare. But he felt at the same time that the intense pursuit of this single object by the most direct and immediate means is liable to breed a certain narrowness that

may bring unwholesome results in other directions. If it were given to a man to throw his whole soul at the highest pitch of intensity, into the work of immediate conversion, he admired him exceedingly ; if, on the other hand, it were impressed on him that there were other things also claiming to be attended to in the kingdom of God, he would not have had him to give them up entirely, for the sake of the other. This was his feeling in regard to himself. When he followed it out in St Peter's there was, as might be supposed, considerable dissatisfaction. The congregation fell off in numbers, and its tone was hardly what it had been. But it would be a great error to suppose that his ministry was unsuccessful. There was a goodly harvest of spiritual results. The congregation continued to be large, and the church was usually full, though not overflowing. His preaching was marked by a solid, substantial richness and power, and in pastoral labour he was most assiduous. By and by, his name came to be connected with a type of Christian teaching which was greatly relished by many superior minds. But of course it was always against him that the people among whom he laboured had been so deeply marked, immediately before, by an image and superscription of a different kind.

We may here introduce two or three extracts from letters belonging to the early period of his life, illustrative both of his state of mind, and his experience of ministerial joys and sorrows. Writing to a friend on the state of his soul in February 1843, he says :—

“ I have been much exercised in regard to these matters of late, and feel more and more that religion is, after all, either *everything* or *nothing* ; that it is either foolish weakness to be concerned about our state at all, or madness to rest at ease a day without a sweet sense of ‘ peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ”

To a friend :—

“ You will see I have reached home safely, and I am now enjoying perhaps the sweetest of all merely natural comforts—a day's complete

and quiet rest of body and soul, after a season of mingled toil, bustle, and exciting engagements. The loud whistling wind around—the well-known voice of November, with the occasional patter of cold sleety rain on my close lattice, add a charm to the feeling of comfort and rest which probably you are tasting by experience at this moment. I often think how blessed Noah must have been in his safe hiding-place when the wind howled, and the fearful tempest beat around him, and the deep, deep roar of that sea of Jehovah's vengeance sounded from beneath in his ears. With what delight would he look around to the strong walls and broad covering above, and that fast-barred door, shut by the hands of Him who shutteth and no man openeth, that not one drop of rain or breath of wind might reach him. Let us think much of *Him*, the man that is a hiding-place from the storm and a covert from the tempest. Let us sit beneath that strong covering, and listen to the wind and rain without—and sing of Him who delivered us from the wrath to come. 'Come, my people, enter into thy chamber, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.'"

In 1843, soon after entering on his charge in Dundee, he says in regard to his position there :—

"I am getting on upon the whole comfortably here, though I am not without serious difficulties to struggle with. I entered, as you know, against not a little vehement opposition on the part of some, and that has not as yet altogether subsided; a few such have left the church, and for the present at least, gone elsewhere : then here as elsewhere there was a sprinkling of residuaries, who have of course betaken themselves, with a few exceptions, to the empty pews in town, and thus in some measure thinned our ranks. You may wonder that such should be found under Mr M'Cheyne's ministry : but you must remember that this is an eminently parochial and distinct district, at a great distance from the other churches ; and so, many attended here for no other reason than that it was the parish church. Still with all these drawbacks we have still a large and flourishing congregation at St Peter's. There were at last sacrament upwards of 900 communicants, and all the seats in church, with a very few exceptions, are let, and if the Lord prospers me, I trust all will still go on successfully as heretofore."

Writing from Dundee to a friend, after the visit of some of

the Irish brethren who were preaching and holding meetings in many towns of Scotland, of his joy at hearing that they were felt to be men of God, he says :—

“Far back as I am in everything that belongs to the life and beauty of a child of God, and often as I do tremble for myself, yet I think I have this mark of the saints of God. I do take ‘pleasure in Zion’s stones, and I do love the dust thereof;’ it gives me more pleasure to hear that there are anywhere men filled with the Holy Ghost, touched with grace from above, and ministering in the beauty of holiness, than any other thing that can be told me. . . . Let the longing wishes and kind remembrances with which we send away our brethren not be vain. Let us make them feel that they have been in a praying country, and let us send them home to their flocks and to their country bathed in a new unction from on high, like the dew on Hermon, the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion.”

Again after a communion season he says :—

“On the Monday evening, Mr Leslie of Arbroath spoke most powerfully to the children, nearly 500 of them, and quite arrested them for near an hour : and when the sermon was over, and I went into the vestry, whom did I find but Mr Milne from Perth, dropped as if from the clouds. What had brought him, or where he had been, I know not, for he set off again immediately after his own part of the meeting, but he was *evidently* sent of God, for a more divine, melting, and powerful message I never heard, and just such as I had been longing and praying for during the whole communion. He spoke for an hour and a quarter, and from the strain of riveted and intense earnestness which rose as he went on, and towards the end became almost painful, he might have gone on much longer without any one feeling that he had unusually detained us. Mr Milne’s sermons are often very wonderful. His style is peculiar. At first, and for a long time, his words fall thick and soft, like falling snow ; but he gradually insinuates himself and gains attention—till the audience are all ear and all heart ; and then he pours in his message in a flood of burning words and thoughts which reach the very soul.”

Writing to a friend early in 1845, nearly two years after he had been settled in St Peter’s, he says :—

“It is not to be wondered at if my spirits are not always of the best—it would be wonderful were it otherwise. This sphere, though

important, and in some respects desirable—is yet far from an encouraging one. There are few, I believe, taking all things together, where a faithful labourer is more exposed to continual heaviness and anxiety. The *grand* obstacle' to a happy and prosperous career in the ministry, I *now* understand much better than ever, and in consequence feel it much more deeply. It is this :—I came here just immediately after a spring-tide, and when the waters had fairly begun to recede : hence from that day to this, I have had to row against the current, and have had continually the painful and disheartening sensation of labouring in vain, and spending my strength for nought. I believe I have not been *really* toiling in vain : the toilworn rower who merely keeps his ground against a back-going tide is not spending useless labour ; still there is all the outward appearance of it, and much of the heaviness and sorrow which fruitless anxiety and labour give. My course here hitherto has been one of uninterrupted anxiety and incessant toil, and yet I barely keep my ground, if indeed I really do.”

To a friend in 1845, who had been criticising his style, he says :—

“I am quite conscious for a long while past of an alteration of style in one point ; namely, in regard to application, which I now exclusively intersperse and never reserve for a formal appeal at the end ; and this I agree with you in thinking the better plan. But *surely* my style of composition was never florid or ornamental in any way ; at least I think my taste is a very plain one, and rejects any enhancement but that of chaste simplicity and truth to nature. True, my mind is essentially pictorial ; I see everything slightly illuminated and tinted in the colouring of fancy ; but my judgment always keeps a strict and almost stern control, and ever condemns whatever is other than *plain*. For this reason I never could have been a poet, for my power of fancy (of imagination I have comparatively but little) has ever been kept under such stern control as to become timid and cowardly, and never could have ventured on any *bold* flight. . . . I wish I were more *bold* and *venturous*, for I never have, as far as I remember, so ventured, without winning something. To give you a kind of idea of this mental defect of mine, I may mention, that of anything I have written, the very passages which are really successful, and which I like to recur to, I put down with *grudge* at the time, with many qualms not of conscience, but of an over-scrupulous judgment and with a half intention afterwards to delete. In writing

and printing (if I am ever to do anything in that way), I shall have always to remember the proverb, 'never ventured—never won.' . . . One grand principle is quite clear, that every one ought to cultivate and improve that which is his taste, and to lay it out to the utmost for the glory of God, always under the direction of a sober, well-regulated, and sanctified judgment. Is not this right doctrine, and may I not be as rich and glowing in my colouring, as my fancy will let me, *always within these limits?*"

Again to a friend who was in trouble :—

"Great tribulations to the Lord's children bring *great* peace, and if we never had *deep* wounds, we should never know what *deep* consolations are. The great tribulations of the redeemed are the deep channels through which the full, calm river of their everlasting consolations flow. . . .

"It is the divine art of faith, and the believer's privilege, taught by the same God that gave the bee its instinct, to gather *honey* from *every* flower, yea from weeds the most bitter and poisonous ; for *all* things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose. And what is that honey ? It is *peace*, *Christ's peace* ; the *peace* of *God* : for when He left us in the wilderness and gave us so many bitter herbs to feed on, He said, '*Peace* I leave with you,' and the promise stands, '*Great* peace have they who love Thy law, *nothing* shall offend them.'

In the year 1845, Mr Burns became the husband of his cousin, Catharine Sarah Brown, eldest daughter of the late Mr William Brown, a leading citizen of Aberdeen. Frank, affectionate, impulsive, and enthusiastic, even to the verge of eccentricity, Mr Brown was a fearless witness for his Lord, at a time when unsparing ridicule was poured on any one who dared to stand up boldly on His side. The marriage of Mr Burns was a singularly happy one. No one could have been better fitted than Miss Brown to be the companion of such a man. An exquisite musician, appreciating all her husband's tastes and acquirements, and deeply sympathising with him in his spiritual experience and aims, she possessed at the same time an eminently practical turn, and by this means was well fitted both for aiding in the congregation, and for the management of the house and the rearing of the

family, under circumstances which would have overwhelmed one less active, careful, and managing. Four sons and four daughters were born in Dundee, a united and very affectionate household, which remained unbroken till after the family removed to Glasgow. Mrs Burns and six children still survive.

The mind of Islay Burns was essentially broad and catholic. It roamed in every direction for truth and beauty ; and wherever they were to be found, it delighted to recognise them. His classical and philosophical studies ever furnished him with new sources of pleasure, and where time and opportunity allowed, the fields of general literature were eagerly cropped. The sense of beauty led him to find a peculiar enjoyment in art—pre-eminently in architecture and in music. To unite the æsthetic and the spiritual seemed to him an important and desirable object, though he well knew that in the union the spiritual was very liable to be overlaid by the æsthetic. While fully appreciating the motive that had led the founders of the Scotch Church to eschew the æsthetic, he did not think that either Scripture or experience required so complete a separation. He thought that in certain sections of the Church of England, and even of the Wesleyan and other churches, the question had been dealt with more satisfactorily. He perceived and deeply pondered the fact that the risks had not always been avoided—that in many cases the spiritual had been crushed to death ; but, on the other hand, where a vital evangelical teaching held possession of the pulpit, the æsthetic had rather helped than hindered the spiritual. Partly through his inquiries into this subject, and partly on wider grounds, his interest in all the great movements in the Church of England was remarkably great. He delighted to search them out, to trace them to their root principles, to connect them with the ancient historical traditions and tendencies of the great parties in England, and to indicate the inevitable course of their future development.

The first occasion of his committing his views on this subject to the press was in 1850-51, in connection with the *Free*

Church Magazine, then under my editorial care. "Chapters on English Church Matters," was the title under which he wrote a few popular papers, placing in their true light those remarkable movements which were beginning to carry intelligent and educated men over to Rome, but on which only a very few persons in Scotland were able to think otherwise than with amazement and horror. These papers gave the opportunity, as it were, for his "prentice hand," and were followed by a much more copious discussion of English Church matters in a series of papers in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, under the successive editorships of Dr Cameron, the late Principal Cunningham, and Dr M'Crie.

The writings of Archdeacon Hare, Archdeacon Wilberforce, Dr Newman, Archbishop Manning, Cardinal Wiseman, Dr Pusey, and others, were subjected to minute examination. The power of analysis and of generalisation evinced in these reviews attracted great attention. To Scotch readers they were unusually interesting, not only for the information which they communicated, but also for the light which they threw on movements that were apt to be regarded as chaotic, and for the clear indication which they gave of coming events, the necessary but not obvious issues of the principles that had come into operation.

All Church history had an attraction for Burns, but mainly in its relation to Christian life and worship. Amid the claims of a large congregation, he contrived to find time for writing a popular volume, which gave a very interesting survey of Church history during the first three centuries, chiefly in the relations which we have mentioned. Other papers of a similar kind were occasionally written; including a short series of "Pictures from Church History" in the *Sunday Magazine* (1868).

In 1861, the Free Church College of Edinburgh sustained a heavy blow, in the somewhat sudden death of Dr Cunningham, Professor of Church History. The appointment of his successor fell to the General Assembly of the following year. Various names were spoken of, as suitable for the Chair; that

of Mr Rainy, then minister of the Free High Church, Edinburgh, being supported by Dr Candlish, Dr Buchanan, and the other leading men, whose nominations were usually carried by overwhelming majorities. At that time Dr Rainy's reputation, now so brilliantly established, did not rest on any special evidence he had given of fitness for teaching Church history, but on the high character he had gained as a minister, and the well known fact that his abilities and attainments were of a very remarkable order. It was felt by the friends of Mr Burns, that considering all that he had written on Church history, and written so well, he deserved to be at least recognised on such an occasion as this. This was the strong conviction of the present writer ; and as he happened to be a member of Assembly, he gave notice of his intention to propose Mr Burns' name. It is not easy at this distance to understand how difficult it was to come forward in direct opposition to those whose influence in the Assembly was so high. The speech in which Mr Burns' claims were placed before the Assembly was a simple statement of facts, but it carried the weight which facts simply stated usually have with a candid audience. On a division it was found that no fewer than 202 votes had been recorded for Mr Burns, while 230 were given for Mr Rainy. There can be no doubt now that the abler man was chosen, and that Mr Rainy possessed qualifications for the Chair of Church History of a very remarkable kind. But it was most gratifying to Mr Burns and his friends, that his name had met with so large a measure of support ; and great good was done by its being made so clear, that the Church was prepared to weigh candidly the qualifications of any candidate, even though he belonged to a quite different circle from that which enjoyed the confidence of the leading men.

Besides his volume of Church history, and his contributions to the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* on the great ecclesiastical questions of the day, Mr Burns wrote a number of tracts and papers, on subjects more immediately connected with his professional work. "The Sanctity of Home," was

the title of a little volume designed to foster right views and practice on the subject of the Christian family. To the *North British Review* he contributed in 1859, a valuable article on Home Missions in their various aspects and bearings; and again in 1863, a paper on Modern Preaching. In 1860, he published the Pastor of Kilsyth, a very interesting and remarkably well written memoir of his father. In a sense Mr Burns had the pen of a ready writer; yet "The Pastor of Kilsyth," was the result of very unusual pains and care. His great desire to enshrine the memory of his father in a memorial that would not give the bare facts of his history, but would reproduce the real life of the man, and the very atmosphere which surrounded him, induced him to bestow his very best efforts on this filial tribute, in reference to which some of his friends may remember hearing him say, with great emphasis, that whatever opinion the public might form of it, he was certain that it was impossible for him to do it better than he had done.

Two years passed after the election of a successor to Dr Cunningham, when again a Theological Chair became vacant, Dr Hetherington having been compelled by ill health to resign the Chair of Apologetics and Systematic Theology in the Free Church College of Glasgow. The friends of Dr Burns (about this time he received the degree of D.D. from his *Alma Mater* the University of Aberdeen) moved cordially in his favour, believing that as he was so nearly appointed in 1862, there would not be much serious opposition to him in 1864. The Chair indeed was not one of Church history, and it was attempted to be made out that his qualifications for the office now vacant did not entitle him to the confidence of the Church. But the truth is, that a bitter opposition arose to Dr Burns on the ground of his catholic spirit as a divine, and that in the discussions previous to the Assembly in Synods and Presbyteries, very disagreeable representations were made with the view of damaging his character for orthodoxy. It is impossible to tell how much vexed and annoyed he was at these

petty but bitter attacks. It happened that, as on the former occasion, it fell to the present writer to take a leading part in the matter ; day after day Dr Burns wrote to him expressing his wish to retire rather than that his character should be exposed to the miserable process of carping and soiling, in which some of the coarser of his opponents indulged. Conscious of integrity, and loyalty to his Master, his Church, and his creed, he felt it a bitter thing, that after expending his best strength in elucidating truth, he should be held up to scorn as an unfaithful servant, and particularly that his character should be exposed to the stifling influence of suspicion. When, in the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh, an opponent was foolish enough to refer to an essay of his on Catholicism, as exemplifying his latitudinarian tendencies, Dr Burns at once republished the essay, and thereby gave convincing evidence that there was no ground for a shadow of suspicion.* The result of the conflict was in his favour ; by a majority of 292 to 215, he was chosen to the vacant Chair.

The emoluments of the Chair being very scanty, a few friends took the opportunity to raise a sum of money as a token of their regard, and as *viaticum* for the journey from Dundee to Glasgow. The local enthusiasm for this testimonial was singularly strong. Two, or at most three hundred pounds had been originally aimed at ; but when the lists were given in, it was found that eight hundred had been raised. The testimonial was presented in the Town Hall of Dundee, in presence of an immense gathering, representing the congregation of St Peter's and the general public. The whole town was glad that one whom they had good cause to esteem so highly had been successful in the contest, though sorry that they were to lose so genial and estimable a citizen. It was painful to Dr Burns to leave the place where he had spent his wedded life, and where all his children had been born, and to sever himself from a congregation to which he was bound by the strongest and tenderest ties. At the same time he felt not only that

* The Essay is republished in this volume.

his whole heart would be in the work to which he had now been called, but that if God spared him, and gave him His blessing, he might be able to render more efficient service than had been practicable in the charge from which he had been severed.

It may be well to glance here at the character of Dr Burns' ministry, and especially of his preaching. Though, owing to his blindness, and perhaps, too, his studious and thoughtful temperament, he did not feel himself much adapted to the detailed work of the pastorate, he conscientiously laboured to overtake it, spending much time in visiting his congregation, and especially the sick. In classes and other duties connected with the young, he felt himself more at home, and he was drawn instinctively to any gathering of young men, greatly delighting in the atmosphere of active thought and generous feeling which commonly prevails at such gatherings. At soirees and social meetings he was particularly happy; his loving spirit threw a warmth and radiance around, and he had a vein of easy, pleasant talk, which could be easily directed either to entertain the company with the play of humour, or to guide them into the more solemn lines of meditation. The one great aim of all his labours as a pastor was to bring men to Christ, and build them up in Him. He could not recognise anything on which his heart could rest with full satisfaction in any one who continued to stand outside of the Kingdom. In preaching, his blindness was again a hindrance to full efficiency; not being able to see the people distinctly, he of course did not get so close to them in soul, as he might otherwise have done, and his delivery was marked by a slight sense of distance, relieved, however, by the manifest affectionateness that played round his heart. His hearers, perhaps, had a feeling as if he were speaking, kindly and warmly no doubt, to men in general, rather than to them in particular, though as he proceeded, this feeling lessened, and they felt him nearer. Urgency in the application of his discourse to individuals was not his gift, as it was so remarkably that of his brother

William. The most characteristic feature of his preaching, to my mind, was its *richness*. Whatever point he took up earnestly, he presented with great fulness and beauty. Whether it was a point of doctrine or of practice, he was never content with presenting it barely, but he would heap together every consideration that was fitted to bring out its manifold aspects and bearings. His mind had a great power of amplifying, and a great command of appropriate and beautiful language. When he struck into one of his happy veins, the effect was delightful. Spiritual hearers felt as if he were guiding them through a tropical garden, where all was luxuriant and sweet. He not only preached the grace of God, but the exceeding riches of that grace. He not only dwelt on the promises, but showed how they were exceeding great and precious. The character of our blessed Lord he delighted to delineate as fairer than the children of men. The luxuriance in which he indulged seldom became wild, nor the sweetness luscious. His words had a music for the soul, that left a charm behind them. An old and appreciative hearer, recalling his ministry could speak "of the days long ago, when dear Islay Burns (whose voice dwells with me like a far off melody), ministered always so kindly, so wisely, so ably, and so well." In point of structure, his sermons had much less of the formal and scholastic element than was usual with the older order of orthodox ministers. There was more of freedom and elasticity, and his topics were selected from a wider sphere. He did not fall into the pious error that it was never safe to lead his flock beyond the rudiments of the gospel theology. Features of Christian character, elements of Christian life, things in nature, too, which are apt to be overlooked, but which are fitted to have an important Christian bearing, were touched on as the occasion served. The foundation was always evangelical and the atmosphere spiritual; but the flight was sometimes in a different direction from that which other preachers chose.

His introductory lecture at the opening of the Glasgow Session was a great success. Many eyes were turned toward him on

that occasion, those of friends as well as foes, and even those who had most thorough confidence in him, could not but wish very earnestly that his first lecture would be such as at once to show his characteristic gifts and graces, and to establish him in the full confidence of the students, and of the Church. The result more than fulfilled their hopes. No one that heard or read it could feel that there was the slightest ground for uneasiness as to his views and influence. It happened that the subject enabled him to use, to great advantage, his peculiar gift of rich and manifold representation. Even those who had felt it their duty to oppose him, now congratulated him warmly ; and he entered on the work of the session with a glad and grateful mind.

Dr Burns' last eight years were spent in the duties of Professor of Apologetical and Systematic Theology in the Free Church College, Glasgow. It is quite as might have been expected, that among the impressions produced on the students, the first, and probably the deepest, was that of his piety. "In him," writes one of them, "the old adage was fully verified—'*Pectus facit theologum.*' His creed was woven into his daily experience and life. Scarcely was his mouth opened in prayer at the beginning of the hour, when we felt the soul-breathings and the mighty wrestlings of a man of God. These devotional exercises were an excellent preparation for the lecture, and helped to keep the balance even (no easy task for the students) between the play of the intellect and the heart. An earnest, prayerful spirit ran through all his words, and we felt quickened and refreshed by contact with him." Another thing that struck them was his scholarly taste and habit. Many an apt classical quotation brightened his style, while from the fathers, and especially from the Bishop of Hippo, he drew large store of valuable material. The charm of his style was very delightful to students, abounding as it did in happy antitheses, often coloured with a tinge of poetry, and always rich, pure, and expressive. On the evidences, especially, his prelections were well adapted

to the times—the Tübingen school was fully met. But what rendered him particularly attractive to the students was his genial affectionate manner and easy address. “The evenings we spent at his house, in the bosom of his family,” writes the same student, “were most enjoyable and stimulating; and methinks I see him now in the centre of a little group of students, listening to their friendly discussions, making himself their leading spirit, and detailing the lights and shades of his own experience. Humility and frankness were two of the brightest ornaments of his character, and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to trace the progress and rejoice in the success of any of his students. Alas! the eloquent voice is now silent in the grave. We believe he is now in the ranks of the Church triumphant. May it be ours to catch the mantle of his virtues and graces, and to follow him even as he followed Christ.”

It was not long before he felt himself at home in Glasgow. The academic sphere was very congenial, and the academic spirit wandered beyond the limits of his own institution, and took a cordial interest in the University. He entered very heartily into some of the details connected with University matters; wrote a book for helping young men to compose in Latin; proposed a plan of junior scholarships, and got it carried into execution; and took part as a preacher in the University Sunday afternoon service. Yet as if he felt the duty of balancing these efforts on behalf of the higher learning by something more rudimentary and evangelistic, he was one of the chief friends and most active promoters of the Glasgow Foundry Boys’ Society. Of this institution he gave an account in a paper contributed to the Sunday Magazine in October 1871. The object of the Society was to gather the working boys of Glasgow on Sundays, and hold a religious service with them. In this service Dr Burns often took part in one of the many schoolrooms which the Society occupied. His last public effort on behalf of the Society was at the annual meeting in the City Hall, when the Marquis of Lorne

presided. The speech which Dr Burns delivered on that occasion was so characteristic of himself, and so happy in its mode of setting forth the subject, that we need not apologise for a pretty long extract :—

“ Amongst the numerous agents of the Society, all busily at work in their several spheres and separate posts, from Port Dundas to Port Eglinton, and from Whiteinch to Tollcross, there are certain other *unseen* agents in whose presence and co-operation the success of all the others mainly depends, and on these I am desirous to fix your attention. They are these five, which, from their singularly beneficent agency, we might almost call the ministering angels of the Society : *Order, Thrift, Music, Fresh Air, and True Religion*. 1st, as to ORDER : The Society proceeds upon the principle, which, I believe, is a thoroughly sound one, that there is in all men, and even in all boys too, an instinct of order ; that the most uproarious crowd of undisciplined juveniles may not only be brought to order, but brought to like it, and fall naturally into it, if you only use the proper means. The principle only wants to be drawn out, developed, educated, in order to vanquish all the powers of chaos and wild misrule. Of this we have remarkable examples in some of the early passages in the Society’s history, as in Anderston and the Olympic Hall ; and any one who chooses to visit this hall (the City Hall) at eleven o’clock on any Sabbath morning, will see another still more impressive. *Order*, then, is the word—order, the most exact, punctual, methodical, almost military. The whole organisation of the Society, from the honorary president to the humblest official, is military. The conduct of each meeting, officered by its full staff of chairman, secretary, treasurer, chief singer, monitors, and stampers, is military. The assembling and marshalling of the youthful congregations, and the whole march and movement of the service, is military. Each eruption into the country, whether for a few miles only on a Saturday afternoon, or far away to the romantic shores of Argyle for a whole week together, with tuck of drum and banners flying, is unmistakably *military*. This, then, is our secret. If there be one original idea, one real discovery in social science, of which the leaders of this movement are entitled to claim the credit, it is this—it is their appreciation of the power of this principle, and the practical sagacity with which they have applied it. Really I regard the little attendance book, which each of our twelve thousand children carries in his

hand every Sabbath morning, as one of the most notable and beneficent inventions of the day. I would send it to the next International Exhibition as one of the most precious products of modern discovery, bearing this inscription, 'An instrument for reducing, in an incredibly brief space of time, a rough mass of young City Arabs to a quiet and orderly group of Christian children.' 2d. Our next instrument of power is THRIFT, and thrift is not so difficult to teach to old or young as many think. In fact there are few things more easily taught, if you only set about it in the right way. In order to impart the taste for *thrift*, it is in most cases only necessary to give a *taste of thrift*. All of us have a certain natural tendency to accumulation—a native turn for gathering, and getting, and keeping, which most men fail to cultivate simply because they never had a chance, or think they never had one. Give him a little balance in his favour at the bank, and instantly there will spring up within him a desire to keep it, and to make it more. It is those who have nothing, and never hope to have anything, that are generally reckless and improvident. One of the most popular novelists of our time (Mr Anthony Trollope) remarks somewhere, that the people who are constantly throwing themselves into cabs to travel short distances, and throwing away their money in all other imaginable sorts of foolish ways, are not those who have much, but who have nothing, or rather a great deal less than nothing, who have a great balance at the bank, but that balance on the wrong side. Their affairs, in fact, are so desperate that they have no motive to take care of them, or hope of making them better. So most people are thriftless because they have no hope of having anything—anything beyond the immediate necessities of the present hour. Give them, then, that hope, and they will immediately begin both to gather and to keep. Now, this Society did not discover this principle, but they can at least claim the credit of taking a firm hold of it, and vigorously and successfully working it out. So they have, from first to last, driven a brisk and thriving Savings' Bank business, the best proof of which is the pregnant and truly gratifying fact—that the expense of the entertainments and excursions, which form so salient a feature of the foundry boy's social year, is always defrayed by the provident savings thus effected by the boys and girls themselves, and that sometimes there is a balance to carry over to the other departments of the Society's work. We train these children, in short, from the first to be steady, prudent, self-reliant working-men, and careful, thrifty, frugally managing, working men's wives. 3. Our next instrument of power is MUSIC, but here I take music in a wide

sense, to include not only that delightful charmer itself, but all that goes along with it. Those varied social joys which enrich and embellish life, and afford a grateful interchange from its sterner cares and toils—play, in short, for boys and girls, and recreation, which is only a graver kind of play, for older children. As to play, the view the Society take of it is, that it is an essentially good and blessed thing, that it is a gift of God, that God made play as truly as He made work, and therefore it is a thing not to be suspected and feared, but to be enjoyed and improved. We are for play then, *free, spontaneous, exuberant, hilarious*, even on occasion *boisterous*, so only it is pure. It is not amusement that harms, but sinful amusement, or amusement which, though in itself innocent, becomes sinful by being carried to excess, or indulged in at an improper time. What does not belong, in short, to the devil, belongs to God, and should be thankfully used and enjoyed as in His sight. Therefore, the dissolving view, the penny reading, the chorus, the song, the flute bands, the merry tale, the merry-go-round, quoits, cricket, all have their place and their function in God's great kingdom of the world, as well as the grave work of life. If not for sober eld, at least for the boys and girls, of whom we read that they shall play even on the streets of the New Jerusalem. As to music, in the literal sense of the word, we can scarcely have too much of it, so only it is of the right kind, and enjoyed at the right times; and much as this Society has done in this respect, my own opinion is, that they might and ought to do much more. Why should we not have at each of our district meetings choirs of trained voices capable of pouring forth as sweet and solemn strains as those drawn forth by Mr Peace from the youthful choristers in the University Chapel? 4. As to FRESH AIR, it is, alas! but very little at the best that we can do in this way; it is a luxury which our city children can never hope to enjoy save at rare intervals. We cannot give them this choicest of Nature's bouquets 'all the year round,' but we try to invite them to it at certain seasons of the year 'once a week;' and then there is our great annual festival,—our glad Feast of Tabernacles, as I have ventured elsewhere to call it, on the fair shores of Lochfine, and beneath the grand old beeches of Inverary Castle,—a privilege for which, permit me, my Lord, once more, in the name of this great meeting, to tender to you and to your illustrious house our most grateful thanks. On such occasions our young friends enjoy fresh air to their fill; quaff fresh air in bumpers and great magnums; fresh air of the purest, freest, and most exhilarating kind; fresh air, not only unmixed with smoke, but, which

is saying a great deal of a Glasgow excursion party, unmixed with whisky. Think of an expedition of eighteen hundred strong marching forth together, fathers and mothers and children, on a Saturday afternoon ; and after a long and joyous day amid the fields and woods, returning at close of eve in perfect order, without one muddled head, one dizzy brain, and say whether a Society which can show you such a spectacle is not a benefit to civilisation, to social order, to Christianity. 5th. Our last ministering angel—an angel not of earth, but of heaven—is TRUE RELIGION. This is our very life blood, the living soul, of which all the rest is but the body ; the others are the mechanism, this is the moving power. Take away this, and the whole movement collapses and falls to pieces, and the Society vanishes out of sight. Take away this, and all our other instrumentalities will lose their power. Take away this, and we shall no longer have living agents to use them. True religion, I say, but true religion of the most expansive and catholic kind. Christians of every name are welcomed to the ranks of our agency, and almost all are found there. That early and noble pioneer of the work—whose name Dr Guthrie has immortalised—Mary Ann Clough, was a member of the Episcopal Church—most of its first band of labourers were United Presbyterians. Multitudes of Free Churchmen and of Established Churchmen fight in its first ranks side by side, and other less numerous denominations furnish their several contingents. We own no narrower platform than the one Lord, the one faith, the one baptism. We need no other rallying cry, no other inscription, no other legend for our banner than this,—‘ For the love of Christ, and of Christ’s little ones.’”

Dr Burns’ services as a preacher were much prized and sought after by his brethren in Glasgow. At public meetings, too, he was often in demand. And what gratified him much, his counsel was often sought and much prized on important ecclesiastical questions, by those who seemed at one time to distrust him. In his later years, hardly any of the wounds were inflicted on that sensitive nature which at one time had caused him so much suffering. And getting thus into a more serene and happy atmosphere, he came to see, in the first place, that he had somewhat exaggerated the feeling that had existed against him ; and in the second place, that what at the time had appeared to be intentional slights proceeded from circum-

stances that in a fair view of them hardly admitted of a different course. During the years spent in Glasgow, he became intimate with many of the Christian laymen of the city, whom he esteemed the more, the more he knew them. As an elder in Kelvinside Free Church, he showed great interest in the welfare of the congregation; and felt a peculiar pleasure in being himself, and in seeing the congregation, under the pastoral superintendence of the Rev. W. R. Taylor.

The last of the more important extra-official labours of Dr Burns was the writing of the life of his brother William. He had already, as we have said, written a sketch of his father's life; but in addressing himself to his new task, he felt a peculiar shrinking of heart. It arose from a conscientious fear that he might not succeed in giving to the world a faithful portrait of one so exclusively devoted to evangelistic work. Deeply similar though the brothers were in their faith and hope, and in the consecration of their whole lives to the same Lord and Master, there were points of difference between them, as Islay well knew, that might prevent him from doing justice to William. The one was remarkable for intensity, the other for breadth. The one would concentrate his whole force on a single point of the citadel of Mansoul, and take it, as it were, by assault; the other would surround the fortress with the various kinds of spiritual artillery, and hope to secure it by the slower process of siege. In William, it was the Godward side of religion that was cultivated, and cultivated to the utmost pitch of intensity; in Islay, the human element also was prominent. William's view of the world led him to suspect and renounce everything that did not belong to the innermost sphere of the spiritual life; Islay saw outside of that circle not a few things worthy to be reclaimed for the kingdom of God. Undoubtedly he thought that his brother's views were rather ascetical. But, on the other hand, he saw in him such thorough genuineness and purity of soul, such true affection to all mankind, such simplicity and godly sincerity, as entitled him to the warmest appreciation of the

the whole Christian Church. He delighted to think that in William there was not one particle of that bitterness or of that spiritual pride which is so apt to flow from the ascetic spirit. His instincts of love had sustained no damage; he could take his brethren to his heart, and love them with an undiminished affection, though in many things, perhaps, they were indulging in what he had renounced. It often occurred to Islay that it would be better if some one more entirely of William's type would undertake to write his life. But happily these scruples were overcome; and every one who has read the memoir will admit that the portrait has been admirably given. It is a great possession for the Christian Church. It is a worthy canonisation of one whose rare graces and wonderful devotedness have shown that the great Head of the Church has yet in His quiver shafts as polished as in any previous age. With great wisdom, the biographer made his brother portray himself. Standing quietly in the background, he hardly ever stated his own views or opinions, but left the great evangelist and missionary to make his own impression. The Church has placed the portrait in its supplemental gallery to the eleventh chapter of Hebrews; and the life of William Burns has become a force of enduring vitality, whose influence may continue to tell on generations yet unborn.

We have hardly ventured to look into Islay Burns' private and domestic life. But those who knew it will bear ready testimony that seldom has a domestic circle been brighter or more attractive than that large group of which he was the centre. From first to last there was indeed the presence of the *res angusta*, but the abounding cordiality and cheeriness and hospitality showed that it had distilled no acrid elements on the dwelling. Who so ready to enter into the troubles of his friends, to encourage them to enterprises before which they were halting, to cheer them when they had bravely done their task? His friendly letter was almost uniformly the first to acknowledge any brochure or book that had been sent from the author to his friends, and so couched as to allay any throbbings of

fear lest the writer had done what was either foolish or wrong. Not less certainly, when trouble invaded the dwellings of his friends, would he hasten to send his word of soothing consolation. Alas, he had in his own circle bitter enough experience of domestic sorrow. Soon after the family went to Glasgow, the youngest child, a bright, lively boy of two, was somewhat suddenly taken away. But a heavier trial followed. His first-born son, a youth of high ability and eminent scholarship, who had just reached the point of an Oxford career where his honours would have culminated, was smitten with fatal illness, and went to Madeira literally to die. It would not be easy to estimate the desolation of the blow. Father and son were very congenial, and their affection for each other was unusually strong; but the class-room testified that however grievous the trial was for the present, its ultimate fruits were of a different order, and that as in many a like case the plaintive cry had been verified,—

“Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee,
Even though it be a cross that raiseth me.”

It had often been my privilege to have Dr Burns for a guest, especially during the sittings of the General Assembly. The last occasion of his being with us was in May 1871, the year before his death, when Mr Fleming Stevenson of Dublin was also our guest. He was greatly exercised about the lowering effect, which the discussions going on in our General Assembly on hymns and such matters, were fitted to have on the standing and influence of the Free Church, and was full of a project of a volume of essays, in which a more healthy tone might be taken on preaching, prayer, psalmody, the sacraments, hymnology, and other questions of general interest. The project was given up for the time, under the impression that in the feverish state of the Free Church it might create fresh embarrassments, and that it was wiser to wait for a calmer opportunity. Dr Burns was very cordially in favour of the proposed union between the Reformed and United Presbyterians and the Free Church, as right in itself,

and as an important step towards the further settlement of church matters in Scotland. The reactionary policy which arrested the movement he mourned exceedingly; it was the culmination of the narrow spirit to which he had always been opposed; but though much saddened and discouraged by the failure of the movement, his hope was that, ere long, the ecclesiastical condition of the country would be its glory and not its reproach.

Dr Burns had come of a race almost proverbial for longevity, and few of his friends had any apprehension of his being removed at the comparatively early age of fifty-five. A local affection of a painful nature had been giving him considerable trouble for three or four years, and in March 1872, a severe attack of hæmorrhage, proceeding from the same quarter, suddenly brought him to the brink of the grave. He had gone through his college work with the utmost regularity; had moreover conducted a large young men's class in the city, formed to counteract the spread of scepticism; and had been taking a share in the Foundry Boys' Society. The suddenness of the attack, which had at first all the appearance of proving fatal, was a great shock to his friends. For a time he seemed to rally, but though the acute attacks were not repeated, the pressure of the ailment proved too much for his strength. After hovering for a few weeks between recovery and relapse, his strength gradually but steadily declined, and on the 20th of May, he passed into the rest that remaineth for the people of God. His illness had been a most painful one, sometimes full of torture; remedies had become unavailing, and hope of recovery had ceased; even the affectionate watchers at his bedside could welcome death as a friend, and be thankful to the grim messenger for bearing him away to rest.

Very simple but very beautiful was his mental experience in the prospect of death. After his first severe seizure, he fully looked for a fatal issue, and nothing could have been more calm or natural than his bearing. He went carefully over some of his manuscript lectures, giving directions as to those

that were to be read to his classes during the remaining two or three weeks of the session. He talked calmly as to what his family were to do when he should be taken from them, entering minutely into all their arrangements. For himself, he said that the one source of support for the sinner on which he had ever leant, was his support then, and that he found it, as he had always found it, enough to sustain him. He felt that amid all his deficiencies and faults, he had tried to spend his life in the service of the Lord, and he had loved the work right well. There was so much mixture of motive in the best of our services as to make them unworthy to be accepted ; but the Master was a gracious Master, and was pleased to own our services, defective and miserable though they were. When the present writer went to see him soon after his seizure, he found him more willing to speak of the happiness which he had derived from a long friendship than to accept of the regrets which the occasion inspired. Afterwards, when the last stage had come, his reply to my inquiries after him was, with a smile, "Just passing through the stream." On my asking whether he did not feel the comforts of the gospel sustaining him, he said, with that perfect honesty which characterised him, "I am too weak to feel much—but nothing to the contrary." And when I asked whether there was anything in particular he would wish to be prayed for—"for an abundant entrance:"—and then he added, "And for a blessing to those I leave behind." Nothing could have been less theatrical, or more natural and real. Literally and figuratively, he had set his house in order ; and when the Master gave the last call, he obeyed as calmly and as readily as ever he had obeyed his slightest command.

Seldom has dust been committed to dust amid deeper regrets ; and never, we believe, with a more sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.

On the Sunday after the funeral, sermons were preached in Kelvinside Free Church, by the Rev. W. R. Taylor, minister of the church, in the morning, and by myself in the afternoon.

Mr Taylor's text was from Phil. i. 23, "With Christ, which is far better." Referring to Dr Burns' death-bed, he said—

"On the night of this day last week, I watched by the dying bed of the beloved friend—Dr Islay Burns—whose removal has plunged us all into mourning. Gradually the bands holding him to earth were being loosened ; plainly he was going from us, and with him, the brightness, and tenderness, and love which were so peculiarly his ; he was passing through the dark waters of the great river, from whose farther shore there is no returning ; and yet all the while a divine light was resting on the scene of sorrow ; going from us, he was going to Christ ; the commissioned angels were waiting to bear upward his ransomed spirit ; the Son of Man was waiting to welcome him into His eternal joy. And now that he has gone from us—now that we shall henceforth miss his familiar form, and elastic step, and genial smile, and stimulating words—now that those who knew him amid all the intimacies and endearments of family life, as a husband and a father, as a son and as a brother, have had the world made empty and desolate to them—now, too, that the Church on earth has sustained the loss of a true son, of a wise teacher, and of a living epistle of Christ—this remains for our consolation, that with him it is 'far better.' The longings to which he gave frequent and frank expression, during the sore struggle of the past months, have, as we fully believe, been realised ; he has reached home ; he has entered into rest ; he has rejoined the loved ones who went before ; above all, he beholds the face of Him he loved supremely."

Referring to Dr Burns' connection with Kelvinside Free Church, Mr Taylor said—

"He stood toward us as a congregation in a close relation. Many of you remember how wisely and well he presided over your affairs during the critical period of a vacancy in the pastorate. And ever since we have marked with growing gratitude the deep interest he took in all that concerned our welfare, and the considerable share He bore in our work. Especially, both by precept and example,—taking his place very frequently in the choir-seat,—he was ever stimulating us in the matter of our service of praise,—a service most congenial to his bright and beautiful nature. To his more public duties he willingly joined those of an elder among us, and I need not say how lovingly and faithfully he discharged these duties. And

how affectionately he went out and in amongst us as a friend ! Ah ! some of us will long and sadly miss him,—the kind, courteous, considerate friend, to whom we might ever turn with confidence,—so happy in easy converse, ever and again letting out bright flashes of genial humour amid more earnest talk,—so ready to give counsel in perplexity,—so willing to render help in need,—so tender, too, in sorrow, for he had himself drank deeply of the Master's cup,—and so full, moreover, of the gentle loving spirit of the God-man with whom he dwelt in fellowship ! ”

From my own sermon I extract the closing sentences, as they happen to sum up what I have tried to write about him in this short memoir.

“In looking back on his career, one sees a path like the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. First the conscientious school-boy, then the diligent student, then the fervent preacher, after that the laborious pastor, the eloquent writer, and the enthusiastic professor—and all through, the bright cheerful companion, the trusty, affectionate friend ; and in his home, the loving son, husband, and father ; the genial host, the Christian gentleman ;—this is what we see, and around it a lustre that becomes brighter and brighter as he nears the end. All that he was, I need not say, we all ascribe to the sovereign grace of God, who girded him before he knew Him, and made him the vessel of honour that he came to be.

“Of the many great and good men with whom he came into contact in early life, there are three that to the public eye stand conspicuous—his father, and his brother, and his predecessor in the ministry at St Peter's, Dundee. In his own character there was something of them all, and yet there was something different from any of them. That, I think, was one of the most notable things about him. He was no copy of any other man. He was able to admire without idolising, and to take the good of other men without slavishly copying. For his father—‘The Pastor of Kilsyth’—I need not say that he had the deepest and most affectionate reverence

His brother—‘William Burns, the missionary’—he looked on, as his Memoir shows, as one of the most signal products of divine grace in the line of service to which he gave himself. The same might be said as to his estimate of M’Cheyne. And yet he did not even attempt to follow precisely in the footsteps of any of them. In pastoral diligence he had considerable resemblance to his father; in concern for souls, to his brother William; in tenderness of touch and of feeling, to his predecessor M’Cheyne. Yet he was different from them all. He might be said, I think, to have a wider view of the kingdom of God, to think of it as embracing more than was at least prominent to the mind of any of them. It was the same kingdom; the great foundation was the same, built as it was on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ its Alpha and Omega, its foundation, its head, its glory. It was the same New Jerusalem that he sought to build up; but he sought to bring into it some elements that often were not thought of,—there were some bright things that he was unwilling to abandon to the god of this world, because when set in their proper place, in relation to the great foundation, they were fitted to promote the glory of Him, of whom and through whom and for whom are all things.

“It was in this sense, but only in this sense, that he might be said to be a broad churchman. The term was once applied to him in the way of reproach by men who were either too ignorant to know what it meant, or too unscrupulous to think of the sting which it carried. Oh! how bitterly he felt the injustice when it was made to imply that he sat loose to the great doctrines of revelation,—the lost state of man, the redemption of Jesus Christ, the work of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost! It was his peculiar glory that with his whole heart he clung to these great truths, and felt them to be the very heart and soul of revelation; and yet, while this was the centre, he could feel an interest in many things that lie, or ought to lie, at the outskirts of the kingdom; he was a scholar, he was a man of taste, he

liked literature as literature, art as art, philosophy as philosophy—believing that there was a place for all of these in the kingdom of God, lamenting the divorce that so often occurs between culture and Christianity, and sympathising very deeply with all who tried to effect a reconciliation—with all who, as figurative ‘kings of the earth,’ sought ‘to bring their glory and honour into the New Jerusalem.’ That his æsthetic and scholarly sympathies never led him too far, it is not for me to say; but sure I am that nothing would have grieved him more than to cause the slightest disparagement of the glorious gospel, or to lessen the impression of the great truth that man by nature is a lost and ruined sinner, for whom the only way of recovery is through the work of Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit.

“In a very eminent degree his mind was marked by transparent candour, fairness, and freedom from prejudice. He could see and appreciate anything that was good in men and systems, from which, perhaps, in very vital matters, he differed most profoundly. He could find in churches, at which coarser and rougher men do nothing but scoff, elements of value for the spiritual life, which he cherished with deep regard. His mind recoiled from the extremes of dogmatism, especially in regard to questions on which the Holy Scriptures touch but sparingly, and which are in a large degree matters of mere inference and application. He had no sympathy with those who, on secondary questions on which the Bible says little directly, contend as vehemently for their views, whether on one side or another, as they would contend for the divinity of Christ or the need of conversion. He had no favour for that kind of orthodoxy, complete and cold, that is bounded by hard and fast lines in every direction, but is wanting in the life, the feeling, the devotion, the fragrance, of the religion of Christ. And yet there were few men who had more real charity in their hearts, even for the most uncharitable; or who, in actual fellowship with them, could be more kind and genial, could succeed better or more easily in establishing

bonds of friendly intercourse, and could leave such an impression of simple winning courtesy.

“It was in this sense that he was a broad churchman, but in this sense only. And let me add, it were well there were more such among us, for in these days of busy culture and daring speculation, such men are of eminent service in shutting out *that* broad churchism which is founded on indifference to vital truth, and which evaporates into mere mist the most essential doctrines of divine revelation.

“Indeed I have always thought of our departed friend as exemplifying in a remarkable degree, on the basis of evangelical truth, what an eminent writer of the day has called ‘sweetness and light.’ The contention of that writer and of his school is, that you cannot have these two things in connection with what is variously called Calvinism, or Puritanism, or Protestantism. The Calvinistic creed, they tell us, breeds nothing but what is sharp, and bitter, and narrow; its domain is a sort of frigid zone, fatal to all that is genial in character, liberal in culture, free and open in the search for truth. It binds you hand and foot,—it crushes all the generous instincts of your heart,—it fills you with suspicious dread of all the humanities,—it gives you a fiery breath, and destroys all the aroma of love and goodness. There are doubtless some who give a handle to such representations. But was it so with our departed friend? Was it not eminently the reverse? Who more remarkable than he for true sweetness? Not the soft simper of weak amiability, but the strong steady pulsation of a most affectionate heart, in which there was no room for any bitterness? What a charm it gave to his friendship, and what a glow it diffused over his life? It was a sweetness with which nothing could dwell that was mean or low, a purifying sweetness, a love fruitful in the best products of love, that cleansed him from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and that gave to his life a purity which is not always found in men of higher pretensions. And as to ‘light’—it, too, was his element; he saw it everywhere—in nature, in science, in

history, pre-eminently in revelation, and he rejoiced to welcome it, greeting it instinctively with the salutation, 'Hail ! holy light, offspring of heaven, first born !' He delighted to trace it out where it seemed but scanty, and to make its rays converge ; never afraid of truth ; always seeking for more and more of it, and convinced that whatever temporary difficulty might be found in arranging the materials which it brought together, all would ultimately be built into that great, harmonious temple, of which Jesus Christ is the corner-stone.

“ And now, my brethren, ‘ the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.’ He hath taken our friend to a higher service, and, much though we miss him, and greatly though we mourn him, we cannot but be thankful for his comparatively early entrance into the joy of his Lord. Oh, to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises ! May the Lord, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, vouchsafe the same gifts and graces to many others, both of the ministers and members of our Church ! And oh, that all of us may learn the lesson of this solemn dispensation ! fight as manfully the good fight of faith, pass as tranquilly through the river, and have an entrance as abundantly ministered to us into the everlasting kingdom ! ”



I.

CREATION'S GROANS AND HOPES.*

“The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now: and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.”—ROMANS viii. 19-23.

IN these deeply pregnant words, the Apostle gives expression to a feeling that is more or less common to all men, in every age and country. It is but the articulate utterance of the universal instinct of humanity. In the largest sense of the word, “the whole creation *does* groan and travail together in pain until now.” All along, the world has been ill at ease. Throughout her whole history, she has been groaning under an accumulated weight of evils, which she has in vain sought either to throw off or to forget. She has been thoroughly and profoundly dissatisfied with her present state, and eagerly looking round on all sides for deliverance. Oppressed with the miseries of the present, she has been

* Preached before the General Assembly of the Free Church, at Tanfield Hall.

ever struggling to escape from it, and has sought refuge by turns, now in the past, and now in the future. Now she looks back to what men call the "good old times;" now she reaches forward to the "good time coming." Now she sings of a golden age gone by; now she dreams of a millennial day at hand. Now she listens to the plaintive but soothing voice of Memory; now to the syren witchery of Hope. That things once were well with her, she easily persuades herself; that it will be well with her yet again, she would fain believe, but never for one day or hour does she dream that it is well with her now. Like a weary patient, she tosses evermore in restless pain upon her bed, and wistfully looks out for the day.

It may be said that all this is nothing more than was natural and necessary. It has been suggested that the deep-felt dissatisfaction with existing things is an essential condition of all improvement, and constitutes the very mainspring of human progress. A state of contentment with present attainment is necessarily also a state of stagnation. It is the sense of something wanting, of some good in the future yet to be attained, that stimulates both individuals and societies to "forget the things that are behind, and to reach forth unto the things that are before." This is true; but there is more in this matter than that. The thing in question here is not mere want, but positive misery. The world, creation, humanity, groan not for the attainment of yet higher good, but for deliverance from present and crushing evils. It is a terrible incubus which she would fain throw

off; a crushing iron chain she longs to burst asunder; a deep, hidden woe, gnawing at her heart, which for ages she has striven, and striven in vain, to heal. She "groaneth and travaileth together," not in want or in dissatisfaction merely, but "in pain," looking and longing for deliverance and rest.

Thus in their broad and general aspect, the purport and bearing of these words is obvious enough. They express a truth which is more or less familiar to us all—that truth, in fact, which has all along constituted the grand problem of humanity and of the world, and of which the redemption that is in Christ Jesus furnishes the one all-sufficient solution. It is when we come to consider the whole passage in detail, that any exegetical difficulties occur, and to this therefore we now proceed.

What, then, is intended by the "creation" here? In what sense does it "groan and travail together" in pain? and what shall be the issue of that "travail?" The first two of these questions we propose to consider at length, glancing only at the last.

I. It must be obvious at once that the *Subject* here spoken of, and which is in our version variously rendered "creature" and "creation," is throughout the whole passage the same. In the original, the word used in each case is identical; nor is there anything in the connection to point out or even suggest a change of sense. The only difference of the expression in our text lies in the addition of the word "whole"—"the whole creation," instead of simply "the creation," which may

indeed be fairly taken to indicate that the word is here used in a greater extent or emphasis of meaning, but certainly not in a different sense. In the former verses, the Apostle may have had more definitely in view some particular part of creation, as, for instance, its living and sentient beings, while here he includes within his view the whole system and general frame of created things; but this amounts only to an expansion, not to a change of meaning. In the 19th verse, he tells us that this "creature" or creation, in "earnest expectation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." It does so, he next tells us (ver. 20), because it is "made subject to vanity," not, however, irremediably, but "in hope" of future restoration. And this hope shall not be in vain,—for (ver. 21) "the creature," or creation, "itself also"—not the sons of God only, but creation generally viewed as a whole—"shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." And then, finally, to show how deep the present misery is, and how urgent the hoped-for deliverance—and rising in energy and impassioned fervour as he proceeds—he adds: "For we know"—every one who has eyes to see and a heart to feel what is passing around him in the world must be sensible of the fact—"that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Thus the whole passage flows on in the closest possible continuity of thought and language, and becomes at once perfectly consistent and intelligible, referring throughout to one great theme—one creation, one struggle, and one deliverance.

But what is this “creature”—or rather, as we can now have little difficulty in rendering it throughout, this “creation?” Does it refer, it has been asked, to the material and inanimate creation? or to the animal creation? or to the human race? If to that, to saints or to sinners—to the Church or to the world? Such are some of the suggestions, by which a cold and frigid verbal criticism has sought to fritter down the grand generality of the Apostle’s words, preferring now the one interpretation, and now the other! Which of these is the right one? We answer, unhesitatingly, neither the one nor the other. The Apostle is here speaking, not of this or that creature, but of the creation; not of any particular part or parts of that creation exclusively, but the whole, “the whole creation,” creation in its unity and totality, the whole of that grand and goodly order which together forms one perfect and indivisible system, and whereof all the several parts are so fitly compacted together, that if “one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.” It is this entire system, material, intellectual, moral, social, spiritual, that constitutes together the world as God made it, and which came forth perfect and glorious from His creative hand on the morning of the seventh day; that creation, of which man is the first and noblest part, and of which all other creatures, animate and inanimate, are subservient indeed, but still essential members; that creation which God made and man hath marred;—it is this creation, this whole creation, which, through all its frame, groans under the weight of the curse, and travaileth together, as in mortal pain and anguish.

To justify, then, the full meaning of the Apostle's language, it is not necessary to show of each particular creature that it individually shares, and groans under, the general misery. That this misery, indeed, is very generally diffused amongst all creatures, and throughout this lower creation, is most certain. In all quarters, and amid every tribe of beings, the general disorder and dislocation of all things is more or less felt. Everywhere do we see the signs and tokens of the curse; everywhere the pangs and throes of a sore travail, which, but for it, had been never known. Mute nature, dumb unconscious creatures, and human hearts, alike betray the presence of a fell, disturbing power. For man's sake, all nature mourns and groans in sympathy. But it is not necessary to show that this is universal. Amid this general travail, there may be still individual exceptions, or even whole tribes of beings, wholly, or in great measure, exempted from it. There may be flowers that bloom as fair, birds that sing as joyfully among the branches, mornings that break as bright and glorious, as in the days of Eden. This does not interfere in the least with the full truth of the Apostle's statement. What he is here speaking of is not the individual creatures in detail, but the creation itself; not the separate parts or members, but the whole body; and his statement is, that this entire frame and constitution of things is out of course; that it is thoroughly dislocated and in disorder; that it groans under the weight of a judicial curse; that it is filled through all its bounds with the sad tokens of mourning, lamentation, and woe.

In this travail, of course, man himself most deeply and largely shares. Of that labouring creation he is himself the chief part, the very soul and centre of the whole system. He is, as it were, the living spirit of which all nature round, animate and inanimate, is but the unconscious body. Indeed, so largely does man bulk in the whole system of the world, that he is sometimes spoken of as if he were its all, and the word "creation" is used almost as if synonymous with humanity. Thus, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," literally, to the whole creation, and again, "The gospel which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature (literally, in the whole creation) under heaven" (Col. i. 23). That man, then—his sorrows and his hopes, his ruin and his redemption—is the thing here also chiefly, though not exclusively in view, there can be no doubt. He, of all creatures, has most to do with these pangs and throes of anguish. He is the one guilty cause of it all. He is the criminal that has drawn down this fell curse on creation, and on himself. It is his great ruin that has made the whole universe round to tremble. He, therefore, is the chief and deepest sufferer. The pangs of the other creatures are but the dim reflection of his; the groans of all creation, but the faint echoes of his mighty sorrow—the feeble accompaniment to that long, deep, piercing cry, that throughout all ages, and from every land, has come forth from the very heart of humanity itself. Man groans and travails in anguish, and all nature, all creation, animate and inanimate, groans and travails with him.

In this anguish men universally share; good and bad, righteous and wicked, heathen and Christian. All participate in it, to a greater or less extent, and with more or less intensity. It is the travail of universal humanity—of human beings, everywhere and always. Even the children of God are not exempt from it. A part of this groaning creation, and bound to it yet by many intimate ties, they cannot separate themselves from its sorrows, so long as they sojourn here in the flesh. “And not only so,” says the Apostle, not only does creation at large groan, “but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.” And again, “We who are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened,” &c. The whole world then groans, and believers groan with it—only with a depth and intensity of feeling, with a perception of the true nature of the malady at work, and with a vehement longing for the one remedy, all their own. The world groans under a malady it understands not, and with blind vague aspirations after a deliverance, it knows not what; the saints groan under the burden of sin, and wait for the complete “redemption” of God. Such is the *Subject* of the “travail” here spoken of; creation at large—man in particular—and most of all the saints of God.

II. *The Nature of the travail* is described by the Apostle in varied and deeply affecting language.

First, it is a state of “vanity,”—a vague and general phrase, but only perhaps on that account the more profoundly impressive, suggesting almost every idea of nothingness and misery. A state of mere emptiness, inanity (so the word means), fruitless abortion, frustration of hope, everything miscarrying of its end, belying its promise, ending in dust and smoke—and all rounded off at last by that one dread fatality that awaits us all, and that pours mockery on all things beneath the sun, the dark, insatiate grave. Such is life everywhere and in all ages:—life in its best estate, life without Christ, without the blessed hope which the gospel brings. “What profit hath a man of all his labours, which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth to the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come thither they return again. *All things are full of labour*, man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.” How terribly vivid is this picture from Truth’s own hand, verified by everything that human hearts have felt, and truest poets have sung, from the beginning of the world till now:

“To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in its petty pace from day to-day,
To the last syllable of recorded Time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !
Life's but a walking shadow—a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more ; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.”

“The creation was made subject to vanity.” Then, *next*, it is a state of “bondage.” “The creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption,” &c. the bondage, that is, of the curse and of the devil—language applying generally more or less to the whole creation, but doubtless more specially to man, who, from a free-born son of God, has sunk down to a miserable thrall and drudge of the Evil One. Bound in fetters of corruption, he is all his lifetime subject to bondage, while he travels on like a doomed and chained captive to a hopeless grave. Poor slave! stooping under thy burden, groaning beneath thy chains, labouring evermore in the mines beneath a tyrant master, set to make thy tale of bricks without straw, and with no reward of all thy toil but bitter sorrow, no resting-place but the grave;—no wonder than thou sometimes bethinkest thyself of thy condition, chafing with thy chains, and looking wistfully around for deliverance.

Then, *finally*, it is a state of “pain,” and that, too, the keenest and most agonising that suffering nature knows. It is pain as of a woman in travail, and crying

out to be delivered. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now.” Let us see whether it is not indeed so. Let us look around us, and see if we cannot descry the traces of this general anguish. We shall not have far to seek. The terrible truth meets us everywhere. The world of matter, the world of mind, the world of social life, the world of thought and of speculation, the world of spirit—all feel the effects of the general and deep disorder, and groan and travail together under it. We see it in *the material world*—alike in the convulsions that shake the inanimate creation, and in those innumerable and deadly maladies to which flesh is heir, that sad catalogue of fevers, palsies, dropsies, consumptions, malignant plagues, spasms, agonised nerves, throbbing brains, and the like, which turn this whole world into a room of sickness, a vast infirmary of the dead and the dying. We see it in *the moral world*, in those far deeper and bitterer woes that afflict the heart, the stings of remorse, the forebodings of retribution, the nausea of pleasures gone, and of sin’s cup drunk to the dregs, the corrodings of care, the bitterness of disappointment, the pangs of separation, and lonely, desolate bereavement, a wounded spirit, a broken heart. Oh! what a deep wail of anguish is every day coming up from the world, swelled by innumerable voices from every land, and from every kindred of the earth, in one sad unending chorus from generation to generation! Therein surely creation groans and travails together in pain. Then look at the *social world*—the world of associated life, whether domestic, national, or ecclesiastical.

There, too, the same unending conflict reigns. What has been the burden of all history from the beginning of the world till now, but just the same melancholy tale of social uneasiness and distress? Foreign wars, intestine strife, sanguinary insurrections, violent revolutions, followed by still more violent reactions, uneasy oscillations between despotism and anarchy, men's hearts chafing with present evil, and ever vehemently struggling after some new and better state of things, which still evermore eludes their pursuit. Thus society, age after age, groans and travails, ever and anon coming to the birth, as if with some new and great development, and yet not having strength to bring forth. Meanwhile, its great deep malady remains unhealed, and the cry of the oppressed, and the groaning of the prisoner, and the bitter wail of neglected poverty, and the deep-muttered curse of the down-trodden slave, still rise in one loud complaint to heaven, and enter into the ears of "the Lord of Sabaoth."—In the *intellectual* and *speculative* world we see the same thing. What a scene of strife and travail do we witness there! the strife of thoughtful spirits, yearning after the light; the travail of struggling reason, wrestling with dark and terrible problems, which for ages have pressed like a weight on the human heart, and which have defied all solution;—the origin of evil—the tyrant reign of sin, unbroken, almost unbroken, under the government of an almighty and infinitely good and holy God—with all those other connected mysteries that in every age have baffled reason and staggered faith. A sore travail surely:—to some deep and

serious spirits, perhaps even more agonising than the bitterest ills of common life, more truly a travail of the soul than any other form of mere natural sorrow. Under its pressure, some noble hearts have almost broken, and felt as if they could not endure existence, unless God should send them light at last. This travail was going on in the Apostle's day,—perhaps at no previous period so intensely as then. It is going on now—it shall never cease, until that final and glorious consummation of all things shall solve at last the mystery of being, and vindicate at once and for ever the ways of God to man.—And now, *last of all*, we see this same travail in the *spiritual world*—in the souls of men who have been awakened by the Divine Spirit to a consciousness of their relation to God and to things unseen. Therein, indeed, is the deepest agony of all—an agony altogether peculiar at once in its nature and in its intensity. They alone know the real nature of the evil under which creation groans; they alone know its real depth and malignity; and therefore they groan under its burden, and yearn after the true deliverance, as no other creature does or can. “They groan within themselves,” says the Apostle, in their own deep hearts, with an anguish which no stranger can intermeddle with, or even understand. “Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.” “I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and on His word do I hope.” “My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.” “Deep.

calleth unto deep, at the noise of Thy waterspouts; all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me." "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times." Thus he "groans being burdened," toiling on in a daily, life-long combat with sin, with death, and all the power of hell; daily dying, yet daily struggling into life, while ever and anon his burdened heart sighs out in anguish, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Such is the mighty travail of this whole creation.

III. On the *Issue* of it we may not now enter at any length. We simply indicate the chief points deducible from the Apostle's words.

1. If the sufferings of creation have been long and terrible, there is the sure hope of a glorious deliverance at last. From the first moment of her travail this hope has been held out to her. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected the same in hope." *Not willingly*. It was not its natural and normal state, but a condition wholly against nature, and superinduced by the curse. It was the result, not of an original constitution, but of a penal doom. Therefore creation recoiled against it, and submitted to it only reluctantly, and of necessity, as the righteous decree of Him who doeth all things well. But in the very act of pronouncing that decree He revealed the promise of a remedy. While justice uttered aloud the curse of sin,

mercy whispered the hope of deliverance in that first primeval promise—"The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." Thus, at the very moment that night settled down on the world, already the streaks of a glorious morning appeared in the sky. That morning, though long delayed, will assuredly break at last!

2. In that deliverance, when it comes, man shall have the principal share. He is manifestly the central figure, throughout this whole momentous history. His sorrows and his deliverance, his ruin and his redemption, form the burden of the whole. All else is on his account, and with relation to him. As in his ruin all creation mourned, so in his restoration shall all creation rejoice and clap her hands. The one grand hope of creation is the raising up of a new and glorious humanity, under a new and glorious Head, out of the wreck and ruin of the old. It is this accordingly that the Apostle in this passage has throughout mainly in view; for ever, when he is speaking of the earnest expectation and painful travail of creation at large, it is still the manifestation of the sons of God, their glorious liberty, their adoption, and the redemption of their bodies from the grave, that is the special object of it. It is their natal, their coronation, their marriage day, and for their sakes nature lays aside her long-worn sackcloth and puts on her festive garments of joy again!

3. But in that glory all creation shall share with them. There shall not only be a new and redeemed humanity, but a new and redeemed creation. "For the creature itself also shall be delivered," &c. It shall not

be destroyed and cast away as a vain philosophy dreamed of old, as a thing necessarily and in itself evil and accursed, a mere clog and burden to the ethereal, immortal spirit, but shall be built up again, a new and nobler frame, out of the ashes of the old. For "we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." And the whole, blessed hope! both in its outward and its inward, its material and its spiritual part, is combined together in the august vision of the Apocalypse—"I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea," &c. (chap. xxi. 1-5.)

4. The present pangs and throes of creation are the preparation and sure tokens of the coming deliverance. The very name given in this inspired oracle to these sorrows is itself a proof of this. For "a woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but, so soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world." Even so, creation groans and travails in hope of a like happy issue. These are not death-pangs, but birth-pangs. They are not, as unenlightened nature, ignorant of the new and living hope, must have regarded them, the throes of an expiring world, but the birth-throes of a new and better system of things. As the partial and temporary convulsions of nations have ever been precursors of great epochs, so shall the collective convulsions and sorrows of all time prepare the way for the greatest and most blessed epoch of all;

and, when that glad day shall come, then shall that once suffering Nature remember no more her anguish in the joy of that new creation, and amid the voices of the morning stars, that shall sing together and shout for joy again.

Come, then, thou Divine Redeemer! Thou one only restorer of a ruined world. "Bright and Morning Star" of the new creation, arise on the darkness of our misery! Thou "Desire of all Nations," come! The ages wait for Thee; creation groans for Thee; Thy saints expect and look for Thee. Let the day break at last, and the shadows flee away!

II.

SEARCHING SCRIPTURE, AND FINDING CHRIST.

“Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”—JOHN v. 39, 40.

MANY of you are doubtless aware that the first clause of this most familiar and pregnant text, as it stands in the original Greek, may be read in two ways. It may either bear the force of an imperative injunction, as in our version, “Search the Scriptures,” or, as in the margin of some editions, that of a simple affirmative, “Ye search the Scriptures.” In the one case, it is the enforcement of a duty ; in the other, the assertion of a fact. It declares either what all men ought to do, or what the Jews, whom our Lord thus addressed, actually did do. Without venturing to pronounce dogmatically on a question at the best doubtful, and on which commentators of the highest name have held different opinions, I would simply remark that the adoption of the latter view, that, namely, which regards the clause as an affirmative, does seem to impart a clearness of connection, and a solemn point and force to the whole passage, which is not otherwise apparent. According to this view, our Lord is pleading with His Jewish

auditors on the ground of their glaring inconsistency in receiving and venerating the Scriptures, and yet rejecting Him of whom these Scriptures so clearly testified. They consulted, and consulted most earnestly, these divine oracles of saving truth, and yet refused to obey the responses which these oracles gave forth. “Ye search the Scriptures,” says He;—ye have them continually in your hands, pore over their sacred pages, fondly dwell on every line and word of the precious roll; ye seek there the secret of eternal life, and all these Scriptures with one consent testify of me, and point to me as the Lord and giver of that life; and yet, in your blind infatuation, ye will not come unto me that ye may have life. Ye are thus self-condemned,—condemned not only by the Scriptures which you hold in your hand, but by your own act of searching them. Ye not only possess that lamp divine which infallibly guides each faithful soul in the way of peace, but you actually hold it in your hands, and hold it down to your path for the very purpose of finding the right way of life eternal, and yet ye refuse to follow the road which its blessed beams reveal. Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me: and yet ye are not willing to come unto me that ye may have life.

Taking the words, then, in this sense, we are brought at once in front of a most important question—a question, too, of as fresh interest and of as vital moment for us in these days as for the Jewish hearers of our Lord eighteen centuries ago,—the question, namely, why so

many persons, well disposed in the main, and in some sort desirous of obtaining eternal salvation, will not come to Christ that they may have life,—will, in fact, go anywhere else, and do anything and endure anything, rather than betake themselves direct to Him in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and to whom both Scripture and their own hearts' convictions point, as the one name given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved.

I. *First*, then, and on the very surface, it is evident that this failure to find Christ was not from any deficiency in the means of discovering Him. It is this which our Lord so emphatically marks in the case of the Jews. They had the Scriptures, and they searched them. They had the mine, and they dug in that mine in quest of the eternal riches. The field in which that glorious treasure was hid lay all around them and beneath their feet. The light which God had kindled in a dark world to break the gloom, and reveal to benighted travellers their way, shone full before their eyes; and that light, like a bright stream of radiance shot athwart a stately picture, shone full on the face of Jesus, the central figure of the whole economy of grace. They had conversed from infancy with primeval promises that spake of Him, with pregnant types that foreshadowed Him, with mystic rites which prefigured Him, with majestic psalms and hymns that sung of Him, with prophetic visions of His glory, which revealed the far future, and brought His coming

and His kingdom full before their eye. All these pointed to one object, and with one voice cried, "Behold the Lamb of God." They could not, indeed, see directly the person of the Lord, for He was not yet manifested in the flesh, nor had eye of man or angel yet beheld the lineaments of that countenance which is fairer than the sons of men; but that old revelation was but one grand picture of Him drawn by a master hand, so that looking upon it, they could scarcely fail to look upon Him. And they did look upon it, look upon it most earnestly and intently. They "*searched*" the Scriptures. They not only venerated, but almost worshipped the sacred volume. The letters of its holy words they regarded with a superstitious and fond respect almost idolatrous, and treasured them up and guarded them like grains of precious gold. They gloried in the possession of them as the brightest diadem of their nation, the palladium of their strength, the most precious birthright of their children and their children's children. The very number of its words, and even letters, they counted, lest in the haste of transcription a single particle of what they deemed so transcendently holy should be lost. The golden sentences they inscribed on the borders of their garments and on the posts of their doors; and they talked of them when they sat in the house and when they walked by the way. In many respects they treated the sacred volume in such a way as to be at once an example and a warning to multitudes among ourselves. With privileges far less than the mass of professing Christians

now, they improved them far more. Yet, after all, they failed; multitudes of those who thus searched the Scriptures failed in finding Christ; or, if they found Him, found Him only to reject Him.

My beloved brethren, how is it with you in this matter? You have the Scriptures as well as they, the Scriptures now completed and enhanced by the clearer and grander revelations of the New Testament Word; not the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms only, but all these crowned and consummated by the record of that of which all the law and the prophets spake; the Law and the Gospel meeting each other, and mutually shedding and receiving light from each other,—like two corresponding sides of one glorious arch resting on and supporting one another, which both alike meet in Him who is the eternal centre and keystone, the eternal “Word made flesh.” Well, then, have you found Christ there? found Him in glorious manifestation to your soul, and as the inward and most sweet treasure of your heart? Have you ever searched the Scriptures for Him? I know you read the Scriptures, and in some sort, it may be, study them; but do you search them,—wistfully pore over their pages, and explore their hidden depths, as one that seeketh the true wisdom, and searcheth for her as for hid treasure? The unbelieving Jews even did this. Do you? Or were even the Pharisees and the scribes nearer the kingdom of heaven than you are? They searched the Scriptures of truth, and yet missed Him who is the centre and sum of all truth; and shall

you not search at all, and yet hope to find Him? May it not rather be said of you with emphasis even greater than of the Jews of old, that "light is come into the world, but ye have loved darkness rather than light, because your deeds are evil."

I speak not now of those who are entire neglectors of the sacred volume, who let it lie amid lumber and dust, condemned and forgotten; who have to run hither and thither to the nooks and corners of the house in search of the blessed book, if perchance it is asked for. Such men live palpably and unmistakably as if there were no Bible in the world, no God, no Christ, no heaven, no hell, no soul to be lost or saved. I do not speak of these, but of many who show some respect to the Bible, and peruse its contents more or less regularly in the closet or the family. They read it, but they do not search it. They turn its pages, run listlessly over its lines, accomplish, with a mind not absolutely asleep or absent, their accustomed portion; but they do nothing which by the utmost stretch of language could be called *searching* the Scriptures. In truth, they are searching for nothing. They are merely discharging a task, complying with a proper and decent custom,—a kind of *opus operatum* to be gone through at certain times as an integral part of a respectable religious profession, and that is all. No wonder they never find Christ, seeing that they do not even seek him, scarce even dream of anything to be sought or found in the field of the eternal word, or aught whatever to be looked for beyond the mere fulfilment of a recognised

obligation, and purchasing to the conscience the temporary satisfaction of having done a duty. Verily, the scribes and Pharisees of that infatuated and blinded generation shall enter the kingdom of heaven sooner than these.

II. I remark again, that the failure in question does not wholly arise from a want of intelligence and right understanding in the use of the means. Observe the case of the Jews. We have seen how they searched the oracles of divine truth; let us now observe the views with which they searched them. They did it with this distinct and definite aim, that therein they might find the secret of eternal life. "Ye search the Scriptures," says Christ, "because in them ye think ye have eternal life." They thus sought the right thing as well as sought it in the right place. They desired to be saved,—to discover and possess the priceless jewel of life eternal which sin had forfeited, but which grace restored, and they went and explored the sacred oracles with the distinct purpose of therein learning how it was to be found. No doubt they had very dim and erroneous views of the nature of the blessing which they were seeking. The eternal life, which is "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord," was a very different thing indeed from that earthly elysium of which their gross and carnal hearts had dreamed. They had scarcely, even in their best moments, formed a conception of that kingdom which, eschewing all the outward insignia of pomp and power, is, in its very essence, "righteousness, and peace, and

joy in the Holy Ghost;" of that crown whose pathway is the cross, of that life which mainly lies in dying unto sin. Still, all corrupted and debased as the idea was in their fleshly minds, it was, after all, the right thing they sought, and in coming to God's Word to search after it, they were so far on the right scent. Had they earnestly and faithfully followed out the pursuit, the mists of Jewish carnalism might gradually have cleared away; the dim twilight might have ripened into perfect day,—and when in God's light at last they saw the light clearly, they might have been startled to find that the long-sought gift of God was a far grander, nobler, diviner thing than they had even in their highest aspirations dreamed. At least, however little they knew of its nature, they were searching after "eternal life."

How many Bible readers nowadays are there of whom even this much cannot be said? How is it, brethren, I again ask, in this matter with you? The Jews searched the Scriptures because in them they thought they had eternal life. What do the great mass of Bible readers think to find therein? Alas! the answer is but too plain. Just nothing at all. They do it simply to discharge a duty, satisfy conscience, while away a tedious Sabbath hour, contribute somewhat to the general sum total of a decent religious profession,—nothing more. Of a great blessing, of a treasure more precious than a thousand worlds to be sought and found therein, of a living Saviour to be touched, of an all-sufficient God to be enjoyed, of an eternal heaven to be antedated now, of the lightened conscience, the renovated will, the burning heart,—of all

this they have no more conception than the moth that eats into the texture, or the tiny insect that flits across the surface of the sacred page. Like a blind beggar wandering through a valley of gems, or the unconscious clown stolidly turning over the clods beneath which lie buried mines of gold,—such is the man who reads the Word, and yet thinks not that therein we have eternal life. Surely, we may again ask, if the Pharisees and scribes of those degenerate and unhappy days were not nearer the kingdom of heaven than such as these?

III. Now, then, for the true reason for the failure of these men. It was not, we have seen, for want of the necessary means of finding the truth, nor yet for want of a certain intelligence and right aim in using these means. Where, then, did the evil lie? I answer, briefly, in the will, “Ye are not willing,” says Christ, “to come unto me, that ye might have life.” It is thus a moral perversity, not an intellectual defect; not a want of light, but a want of love. It is to be remarked here that the word “will,” as employed in our version, is, as the original clearly shows, to be taken emphatically, not as expressing the mere future tense, but a distinct act of volition, “Ye are not willing to come unto me.” Ye know who is the Author and Dispenser of the life you seek, but ye are not willing to come unto Him for it; ye sincerely desire that which Christ comes to bestow, at least according to your own conception of the blessing; in point of fact you have been searching the Scriptures for it, but ye are not willing to come for it to Him.

Your conscience cries, your heart yearns for rest and peace, that rest and peace which is only to be found in Christ, and in your heart of hearts you feel that you ought to come to Him, that it is madness to stay away, but ye are not willing. There is something about Christ himself that you recoil from ; something which, even when you would enjoy His benefits, repels you from close contact and intimate fellowship with Himself, and makes you unwilling to come. What is the reason of this ? It is chiefly, I think, twofold :

First. The natural carnality of the heart. By nature and by habit we live immersed in the things of sense. At home, among things outward, material, tangible, we with difficulty rise to any conception and contemplation of things spiritual and unseen. Dwelling in a world of earthly shadows, we come to regard them as the only true realities, and become incapable of imagining anything better or higher. That which eye hath seen, which ear hath heard, and which entereth into the gross and earthly conceptions of our natural reason,—these are the boundaries of the world in which we habitually live, and anything beyond seems to us a visionary dream. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Now, to this spiritual world, Christ and all that essentially pertains to His kingdom, belongs. We cannot see Him with eyes of flesh, we cannot touch Him with hands of flesh ; to approach Him, to hold converse with Him, we must go beyond the bounds of flesh and sense alto-

gether, and enter into a region wholly new. We must soar on wings of spirit and gaze with eyes of spirit; and with hands and senses, spiritual and divine, hold converse with the unseen. To the natural carnal mind this is a hard saying. It is one main reason why natural men will not come unto Christ, that they may have life. Indeed, they do not know how to come; scarcely know what coming means. Oh, what need for such to cry for the Spirit! that Spirit of which Paul so joyfully speaks when he says, "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God."

Secondly. The love of sin. They instinctively feel that they cannot come to Jesus and live in His divine and holy fellowship and yet live in sin. They feel that there is a natural and eternal incompatibility between the two things. Blinded as their hearts are, they are not so blinded as not to see that if they come to Jesus, the Holy One, they must be conformed to Him; that if they live within the attraction of His fellowship, all old things must be done away and all things must become new. They may come to Jesus just as they are, but they cannot abide with Jesus just as they are. They cannot dwell with the Holy One, and yet live unholy; with the lowly Lamb, and yet retain their pride and vain-glory; with the fount of love, and yet live in selfishness and malice one towards another. The very sight of that countenance which is fairer than the sons of men, that countenance on which love sits enthroned, and purity ineffable dwells, must either repel into

antagonism or draw into sympathy. All this they feel. Were it a mere new doctrine, a religious system, a ritual observance, a specific duty, it were quite otherwise. These are things which a man may handle and deal with at his will, and in other respects live as he lists; but it is another thing to draw near and to hold fellowship with a person, a living person, above all, such a person as the most holy and blessed Son of God. With such an one we cannot converse, cannot dwell without a living contact of heart with heart, soul with soul, which must either drive them into wider variance than ever, or bind them in sympathy, in likeness, in oneness of nature and being, closer and closer than ever. This is what men feel; therefore they are not willing to come to Christ that they may have life. They are quite willing to get blessings from Him, but they are not willing to dwell with Him. They love the hope of heaven it may be, but they love their sin and their carnal pleasures better; and therefore they will not come to Him that they might have life. They feel that if Jesus once comes into their hearts and homes, He will make an entire revolution there; that "Take these things hence" will be the very first accents of that holy voice that shall resound through the temple of their hearts should they ever bid welcome to that King of glory; that like Zaccheus they must signalise their reception of that adorable guest by such an act as this, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor," &c. And for this they are not prepared. All other treasures would they willingly lay at His feet, any other dainties lay on

His table, to regale that blessed Stranger ; but this, the sweetest of all to Him,—that for which He came down from heaven, that for which He endured the cross, that for which He stands at our door and as a suppliant pleads, that in which He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied,—the sacrifice and surrender of the heart's darling sins on the altar of His love,—this they will not give ; therefore they will not come unto Him, therefore He and they remain strangers for ever.

One or two words now in conclusion by way of practical inference. Learn the preciousness of the Bible as a means of leading us to Jesus. How precious must be the casket that contains such a jewel ; how glorious the field that hides beneath its surface such a treasure. That casket, my brethren, that field is yours. Here is the clue which, if you firmly hold and surely follow it, will guide you out of life's labyrinths to the glorious light and liberty of the kingdom of God—will guide to Christ, to God, to heaven. Oh, clasp this priceless treasure to your heart ; and as you remember that the whole universe is not equal in value to one Bible, thank God on your bended knee that ever the blessed volume reached your hand, and pray, “ Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in Thy law.”

Learn the worthlessness of the Bible if it leads us not to Christ. After all, the Bible is only a light to show us the way,—a hand to point us to the cross,—a voice of one crying in the wilderness, “ Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.” It

cannot of itself save us ; it can only direct us to Him who can. It can never serve as wings to bear us to heaven, but it may be a millstone to drag us down to hell. It cannot save us, but it may condemn us. This, and this only, is life eternal, even to know Him who is the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

III.

FAITH'S VISION.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”—HEBREWS xi. 1.

IN these sublime words we have what has sometimes been called the inspired definition of saving faith; and yet when we look at it closely, it is not so much a definition as a description. The Scripture deals not much in definitions; its element is not so much that of abstract forms as of living truth; it delights to regard the things of the Spirit, not in their metaphysical essence, but in their concrete, actual embodiment. Its language is not that of the schools, but of common men, and of that real everyday world in which common men fight their life-battle, and win or lose the prize. It furnishes not articles for a creed, or links for a logical chain, but life-truths to fire men's souls,—living germs of thought to take root in the human heart and spring up into immortal fruit. Its aim is not alone, or mainly, the information of the reason or the theoretical development of doctrine, but the quickening of the Spirit, the new life of the soul. Accordingly, the Apostle, in proceeding in the words before us to give some notion of the true nature and functions of

that divine principle of grace, tells us not so much what it is as what it does. "Faith," says he, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,"—that is, it imparts substance and reality to those objects of the believer's expectation which else were shadowy and unsubstantial, and certainty to that unseen world of eternal things which else might seem but a visionary dream of the heart. It makes future things present, distant things near; it overleaps the bounds of time and sense, draws the eternal veil, and brings all heaven before our eyes. It makes the soul at once a prophet and a seer, anticipating the future and beholding the unseen; it lifts it above the thralldom of time and sense, and teaches it in toil and suffering, life and death, to "endure as seeing Him who is invisible." Such is the nature, and such are the blessed functions, of "precious faith."

Faith thus, it will be seen, has to do exclusively with two things, or rather, with two classes of things, viz., the future and the unseen. It is the direct opposite of sense. Where the realm and sphere of sense ends, the realm and sphere of faith begins. Says the apostle elsewhere, referring to this very distinction, "We walk by faith, not by sight." The things of which the one takes no cognisance are the very things with which the other has to do. Where the one is blind, the other sees. What is night to the one is day to the other. Where the rocks, and the trees, and the rivers, and the flowers of sense die away into darkness, the stars of faith shine out in their glory. In short, what

“eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart” of nature to conceive, with rapt vision faith beholds, with beatific fruition she enjoys, and it is the one divine sense which sees, hears, grasps, handles, and for evermore possesses them all. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

I. “*The substance of things hoped for.*” A great part of the life of man here below lies in hope. From the very law and constitution of his nature it is so. He is ever, by an irresistible instinct, looking forward, pressing onward. A living fountain of bright anticipation springs up within the heart, and sparkles in the light of the rising sun. He never can feel that he is at rest, that he has attained his ultimate satisfaction and goal. He “never is, but always to be, blest.” Thus, all our life long, hope continues our companion and our counsellor; and even in this present world the things hoped for occupy the largest space in our thoughts, form the most influential element of our daily existence. Indeed, it is to this world pre-eminently that hope belongs. Here is its distinctive sphere and realm. There is no place for it, at least in its present form, either in heaven or in hell. In the one there is nothing to be hoped for, in the other there is nothing to be desired. In the bright world above hope has been glorified into fruition, and in the realm of woe it has darkened into despair. Here, then, is the place for hope; here, in this uncertain, fateful struggle between life and death,

salvation and perdition,—in this twilight realm that is neither night nor day, but a dim border-land between the one and the other,—where the sun of earthly joy is sinking, and the sun of a better life has not yet risen. To this dark prison-house of our exile and our bondage, this heavenly visitant comes and bids us not despair. Amid our homes of sin and sorrow, toil and care, that angel form glides day by day, cheering the mourners, lifting up the fallen from the ground, nerving to fresh courage the despairing heart, and singing pleasant songs in the ears of those who had hung their harps on the willows, as they deemed it, for ever, and could listen to the voice of no other comforter than her's.

How forlorn, brethren, were our condition here on earth, were there no such comforter,—were there no solace or balm for the woes of time but that which is to be found in the past or in the present!—What is *the past* to us? It is gone. It is nothing or next to nothing to us now. It is away, away amid the everlasting shadows, irrevocably and for ever. Nothing remains to us of it but its recollections; and what recollections? Mainly of its pleasures and of its sins; of its pleasures that are departed, and of its sins that will not depart,—of its pleasures that wave to us a last adieu, of its sins that stare upon us and scare and affright us, and with shadow-hand write records of doom on the wall,—the one a heap of withered flowers, the other a nest of sleeping serpents. Happy, thrice happy they who have recollections of another kind,—of days spent with God, of holy, blessed

work done in the name of the Lord Jesus, of precious moments here on earth that sow the seeds of beatific ages above, of holy friendships cemented here to be perpetuated for evermore in heaven. These things, indeed, live. All that is of God, all that is of heaven lives, but all else dies, perishes, vanishes like fragrance from withered flowers, or music from the harp whose strings are broken, and whose very framework moulders and rots away amid the ruins of the world.

And then *the present!* Surely it is not needful that we should say much of it, for with one consent men are ever striving to eschew it, and to seek an escape from its cares and unrest, either in the past or in the future. No one ever thinks of it as a thing to rest in, as anything more than an endurable transition state between that which is past and that which is to come. Then, every day we live it becomes less and less a thing to rest in. Every day the past becomes more and more sad, and casts a sadder and still sadder shadow on the present. Affections blighted, longings unfulfilled, early hopes crushed or long deferred, confidence betrayed, love's dearest, holiest treasures thrown away, friends, kindred, endeared companions of other days dead or estranged, trusted hearts found hollow, distrusted and injured ones too late found true, old wells of blessing dried up and new wells of Marah opened that shall never run dry,—these, and it may be sorrows darker still, a guilty conscience, a blighted heart, a wounded spirit, a wasted, degraded life,—and all terminating at last in that great, great darkness toward which the stream of life is ever rushing

and never returning. Such is life,—the life of man upon the earth, were there nothing to be hoped for beyond, no good thing to come when this weary life-struggle and this load of flesh dissolves. Oh, the future, the future! the bright, the glorious future! the good time coming, the true and everlasting golden age, the calm after the storm, the spring after the dreary winter, the daybreak after this long, dull, dark night, of which poets have sung and weary struggling hearts have dreamed, but which He alone who is the Lord of the ages can reveal,—it is *this* alone which makes life indeed a blessing, that makes conscious, responsible existence indeed a blessing, as well as a most awful and mysterious gift of God.

Now, it is in this realm of the future that faith lives. That is its native sphere and clime; not only so, but it transports us also thither. On wings of bright anticipation it bears us away from this land of shadows and dreams, and sets us down amid other scenes, in another clime, where she herself lives. “She is the substance of things hoped for.” In this respect faith and hope seem in nature much alike. Both live in the future, both alike have to do with things unseen, but in a somewhat different way. Hope dreams of them, faith sees them; hope is the wistful, longing heart, faith is the piercing eagle eye; hope gilds and glorifies the divine object of the soul’s expectation, faith substantiates and gives reality to them. Says the apostle, “Faith is *the substance* of things hoped for,”—that is, as most of the old commentators used to explain, that which gives substance and solidity to them gives body and palpable existence to

them, changes them from a mere dreamland or cloudland of airy nothings, into a real world of most solid and tangible realities. And this, too, enables us to see the distinction between earthly hope and heavenly hope,—not as regards their object only, but their very nature. Earthly hope is the mere peradventure of future good. Heavenly hope is the expectation of it. The one merely whispers to the trembling, sinking heart that all may yet be well, the other assures it that all *shall* yet be well. “Which hope,” says our apostle elsewhere, “we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail.” There is a solidity and substance in it, a security and steadfastness, a sober certainty of waking bliss, of coming redemption and life, which belongs to no other kind of hope. In short, it is hope informed and sustained by faith. “*Faith* is the substance of things hoped for.” Natural hope lives on imagination and fancy, divine hope lives on faith. Faith puts the glass of vision into hope’s hand, that from the summit of the delectable hills she may descry the sunlit towers of the celestial city, and survey in its length and breadth the land that is afar off. And thus the pilgrim heart, “though it hath not yet received the promises, yet sees them afar off, and is persuaded of them and embraces them, and confesses that she is a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth.”

But what are “*the things hoped for*” of which the apostle speaks, and with which faith thus has to do? Time would fail me to speak in detail on a theme so

boundless, even were it possible to speak fitly on that which is "unspeakable," which "it is not possible for a man to utter," and yet I am unwilling altogether to leave the subject in a dim and vague generality; for as it is the property of faith to give body and substance to the things of the future world, so it is its property to give them distinctness also, and thus to present a definite aim and mark to the soul's aspirings, which else would shoot its arrows blindly and at random.

Without then attempting a complete enumeration or description of the things hoped for, we may sum them up under the following heads:

1. The presence and favour of God, and His gracious help and guidance during all the days of our life. "For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

2. Complete deliverance from sin, both in its guilt and power, and perfect restoration to the image and fellowship of God for ever. "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, holy, and without blemish."

3. Support in a dying hour, and an everlasting victory over the last enemy. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

4. A glorious resurrection from the dead at the last day, and an open acknowledgment and acquittal in the day of judgment.

5. And finally, an eternity of blessedness in the presence of God and of the Lamb in heaven, in beatific vision of

God, in the full consummation of our nature in body and in soul, in the perfection of all our powers, the satisfaction of every right desire, and purest, noblest aspiration, for evermore. But, what need we say further? Why strive to multiply and heap up words on a subject where all words fail, and where it is not so much words that we need as eyes,—eyes to see “the things which are freely given to us of God?” The Lord impart to us all the heavenly eyesight, and clarify and brighten it more and more! The Lord “increase our faith,” even that faith which is “the substance of things hoped for!” May He, who “commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ!”

But I go on now, in the second place, to glance briefly at the other view of faith here presented.

II. “*The evidence of things not seen.*” These words are not, as it seems to us, a mere repetition in a different form of the previous statement. The apostle is speaking, I think, of a different object, or class of objects, and consequently of a different exercise or function of faith. Before, he spoke of things non-existing, but which are yet to come; now, he speaks of things already existing, though as yet unseen. The objects of the believer’s expectation are not all future. Some of them (and among these some of the most glorious) already exist, though for the present, by a thin veil of sense, hid from our view. Not only is there a bright world of glory yet to be revealed, when the “redemption of the body” and

its revival shall have ushered in the full manifestation of the sons of God, but there is a city of God already built, and already thronged with blessed inhabitants,—though as yet we are only travelling thither, and have not yet passed its pearly gates. The Church militant and the Church triumphant,—the family on earth and the family in heaven,—the inner sanctuary of beatific vision and the outer court of expectant faith,—are in themselves coexistent and contemporaneous, though for the present to mortal sense separated and cut off from each other. Heaven is already begun though we see it not, and the deafened walls of the banqueting chamber permit not even a whisper of the celestial voices to pass through. And so our apostle elsewhere speaks of the Church, not only as looking forward to that beatific state as yet future, but approaching it as a thing already existing, and ready waiting her. “Ye are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,—to an innumerable company,—of angels the general assembly, and to the church of the first-born which are written in heaven,—and to God the Judge of all,—and to the spirits of just men made perfect.” In the very presence of that august scene we stand,—we tread on its verge and margin. It is ready waiting for us, and we are approaching it nearer and nearer every day, till at last the mysterious veil rends asunder, and all the hidden glory bursts upon our sight.

But how is it with us, meanwhile? Are we entirely cut off from that bright world of joy, wholly shut out and exiled from our rest? Is there no link of connection

at all to bind us to the better land, save that which the mere hope of ultimate salvation gives? Does no beam of glory visit us in this land of darkness? Are no grapes of Eshcol brought to cheer us in our pilgrim way? Nay, brethren, for "*Faith is the evidence* of things not seen,"—the evidence, *i.e.*, the proof, the demonstration of them; at once the revelation of them and the authentication of them in their divine truth and reality to our hearts. What the eye is to the body, such is faith to the soul,—and as the one reveals and assures to us the existence of the world of sense, so the other reveals and authenticates to us the world of spirit. As we have ocular demonstration,—the surest of all demonstration, of the one, so we have ocular demonstration, only of a higher and diviner kind, of the other. "God hath revealed these things unto us by His Spirit,"—and what the Spirit reveals, faith sees, sees in the light which the Spirit sheds, sees with those organs of purer vision which the Spirit creates; and so by faith we are "come to Mount Zion,"—see its golden spires and resplendent walls, and catch at least the distant echoes of its songs,—nay, by faith we may not only approach but may enter in, tread the golden streets, drink the living springs, and cast our crowns before the throne! "*The evidence* of things not seen." What a blessed air of assurance and certainty, brethren, is there in these words! How different from the irresolute voices of the schools, those feeble guesses at truth which, in the pages of ancient wisdom, are at once so touching and so sad! How far removed, even from the highest imaginings of those who

sometimes indeed reasoned well of "life and immortality," but still with all their reasonings failed thoroughly to convince themselves and fully to satisfy their own heart,—weighing conjectures, balancing probabilities, doubting, hoping, fearing, but settling nothing on which an immortal soul might lean, on which it might plant its foot and calmly wait the end.

True, indeed, God has never wholly left himself without witness of the great verities of the world unseen, and of the life to come. Nature has never ceased to foreshadow what it could not reveal. The heart, made for immortality and hungering after it, whispers the mighty secret. The conscience, living witness of a law and of a judgment yet to come, forbodes it. Reason, interpreting as she may the hints and analogies of nature and providence, surmises it. The contradictions and anomalies of this present life and its interrupted beginnings, that point to endings beyond the veil, demand it. The instinctive thoughts and feelings of universal man, in every age and every land, proclaim it; yet all together fail to impart to the soul a sure and abiding conviction of its truth. They are rather but probabilities in aid of faith, than the grace of faith itself. Man can never get quit of the dream of a future world. It clings to him, it lives within him, yet no more can he fully satisfy himself that it is anything but a dream. It is the prerogative of the gospel, and of the gospel alone, to do this. It alone hath "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light," and transferred the trembling hope of nature into the "sure and steadfast hope" of grace.

Christ is "the Resurrection and the Life,"—and holding His hand, feeble, timid children as we are, we go calmly into and pass through the great darkness, singing the while, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

My dear brethren, is this hope yours? Is your hope (for every man has a hope) of that kind which is informed and sustained by faith, and by it rendered indestructible and everlasting? If not, be assured it is a miserable dream, a feeble and flickering taper at best, it will go out in darkness at the very time you need it most. Earthly hope belongs distinctively to the early stages of life, and fades away according to the progress of the years. The sanguine spirit of youth is the oil that feeds its flame, and when the fountain dries up within the heart, it too fades away and dies. The old know little of hope. They live not in the future, but in the past, groping amid the shadows of departed years, and living the old days and fighting the old battles over again. But heavenly hope is ever young and ever strong. It is "a living hope,"—"a hope full of immortality." It shall not die but live, and declare evermore the works of the Lord. Even in the passing away of time it shall not pass away, but shall be only changed, transfigured, glorified, passing in that great awakening day from the sweetness of anticipation to the raptures of fruition. And so it can go on its way to the last, amid withering

flowers and drying cisterns, singing, "Yea, I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

IV.

FAITH'S TOUCH.*

“And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng Thee, and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me : for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.”
—LUKE viii. 45, 46.

IN nothing are the miracles of our Lord Jesus more remarkable, than in the exhibition they afford of the nature of that saving faith by which the blessings of salvation are apprehended, appropriated, and effectually applied. In them, that divine principle of grace is not so much described as embodied. We are not only helped to conceive it, and to think of it, but we *see* it. It becomes not so much a matter of understanding as of observation and sense. The thing becomes in a manner palpable. We learn how souls come now to Jesus for spiritual help and healing, by beholding them actually coming to Him for temporal deliverance and relief. It is wonderful what a flood of light is often shed on a subject in itself abstruse and difficult by one such living instance. It is better than a thousand definitions, or even whole treatises on the abstract notion

* Preached on a Communion Sabbath.

of saving faith. To say that such faith is to believe in Christ, to credit the testimony of God concerning His Son, and to rely upon it, to trust in Him, to appropriate the blessings He has purchased, and accept the offers He brings, &c., &c. ; all this is correct and true : it is sound and unexceptionable theology ; but what a faint, dim, and unimpressive view does it give of the whole subject compared with one of those instances of *faith in action* with which the gospel history abounds. The Syrophenician woman clinging to His feet, and refusing to be spurned away,—Peter sinking in the waters and stretching out his helpless suppliant hands,—the leper standing afar off, and saying, “ Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,”—blind Bartimeus, filling the air with the proclamation of his woes, refusing to be silenced, but crying out only so much the more, the more they sought to stay him,—and last, but perhaps most touching and divine of all, this woman in our text, feeble, pale, emaciated with long disease, shrinking from shame, trembling from fear, jostled and driven aside by a rude unfeeling crowd, but determined to get near the Lord, and touch, if nothing more, the hem of His garment, or, if she cannot, then to die on the way, rather than wilfully throw away the blessed opportunity,—these do not so much tell us what faith is, as show us faith itself. We see its very eye, flashing with eager hope and trust ; hear its very voice, thrilling with suppliant earnestness ; behold the very hand, grasping, clinging, holding fast the hope set before it. Tell the trembling sinner in the hour of his soul’s agony, with all the precision of set

theological phrase, to act faith in Christ, to close with the terms of salvation, to give full assent and consent to the offers of mercy,—and he will not understand you, he will look at you with wild, unmeaning gaze, that tells you that your words have never touched the depths of his soul; but tell him to look to Jesus, as the dying Israelite did, to cry to Him from the depths, like sinking Peter, to cling to His feet like the poor Syrophenician woman, and claim, if nothing better, yet the crumbs; tell him, like this woman, to come behind Him and to touch the hem of His garment, for that if he but touch His clothes he shall be healed,—and you will speak to him in a language which has been in all ages the vernacular tongue of the weary and the heavy laden, and his eye will kindle up with hope, and he will feel that there may be mercy even yet for him. So much are we affected by what we see, rather than by what we merely conceive; insomuch that those things, which are in their own nature most deeply inward and spiritual, are never so clearly apprehended or so powerfully realised as where they are practically acted out, and as it were, embodied in living words and deeds. How many a tempted soul on the brink of despair, how many a troubled saint wrestling with doubts and fears, has caught a gleam of hope, and found fresh courage to look again to God's holy temple, by calling to mind this woman's case, and catching up the echoes of her imperishable words, "If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole."

It will be seen that we do not contemplate the

consideration of the whole narrative, and of all the varied lessons of doctrinal and practical instruction which it suggests. We confine our attention to that part, and to those aspects of the subject more specially embraced in the words which I have read as the text. We may divide the subject-matter thus :

I. What this woman did. “Jesus said, Who *touched* me ?”

II. What the crowd around did. “Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude *throng Thee, and press Thee*, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me ? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me.”

III. The test to distinguish between the one and the other. “Somebody hath touched me : for I perceive that *virtue hath gone out of me*.”

I. *What the woman did*. That more is meant here than the mere manual or external touch is evident, not only from the whole circumstances of the narrative, but from the explicit and emphatic testimony of the Lord Jesus Himself. He expressly distinguishes between her touch and that of the unthinking crowd around as a thing totally and essentially different ; and then, in His closing words (ver. 48), He declares plainly what that thing was, “Daughter, *thy faith* hath saved thee, go in peace.” That is, it was not the mere bodily contact that constituted the saving touch, but that living faith of the heart, of which it was but the instinctive and touching expression. That faith, while everywhere in nature the same, manifests itself variously at different times. Some-

times it tells its tale by a look, sometimes by a cry, sometimes by words, sometimes by tears, sometimes by a single ejaculatory utterance, sometimes by long and enlarged supplication, sometimes by passionate pleadings for mercy, sometimes by calm breathings after God, sometimes by smiles of cheerful hope, sometimes by groans of strong agony. Thus its language and its moods vary, but its nature is still the same; and whether it speaks by the suppliant eye, or by the listening ear, or by the pleading tongue, or by the eager feet and outstretched hand, He that searcheth the hearts and knoweth what is the mind of the spirit, still hears the same language, "To whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" "Lord, save me, I perish." And never truly did that faith find more expressive language, or exhibit itself in a light more touching and instructive than in the present instance. Let us mark her act for a moment, and note carefully what it implies.

1. Hers was *secret faith*. It was unseen and unknown by the world. Not one of that vast crowd, not even the apostles themselves, had any idea what was passing in her soul. It was a deep secret, wrapt up within her breast, which no eye could scan but one. It is not her object to proclaim her faith, but to obtain her cure; and so all alone and in secret, with her eye and her whole soul fixed on that one object, she presses near the Saviour.

2. Then it was *trembling faith*. She shrunk with fear and shame, and sought to hide herself both from

the eyes of men and of the Lord. Her disease was one which not only entailed suffering and danger, but ceremonial uncleanness, and which involved her separation from the congregation of the Lord. Hence, while eager to press forward, she in her heart shrunk back. She would pass through the crowd, and yet hide herself amid the crowd; she would come near to Jesus, but she would come behind Him.—And has it not sometimes been even so with some of you? Burdened with sin and shame, you felt as if you could scarcely dare to lift your eye to heaven, or intrude, unworthy, into the holy congregation of the Lord. You could not stay away, and yet you scarcely dared draw near. You would touch the hem of His garment, and yet fain hide yourself from every human eye. You would even, were it possible, hide yourself from His, and, like this woman, come behind, while you sought His saving grace. Again,

3. Hers was *an imperfect faith*. While morally strong, and prevailing, it was intellectually weak. It had little knowledge, though it manifested much grace. We see this weakness, this dimness and confusedness of spiritual vision in the very fact that she even dreamed of the possibility of eluding Christ's notice, and, as it were, stealing a cure from Him; we can trace it also in the manner in which apparently she expected her cure to come. While rightly tracing it to the grace and power that dwelt in exhaustless fulness in Christ's person, and so looking in genuine faith to Him, she yet plainly conceived of that healing virtue flowing out in a kind of magical way from His person and His garments.

How else could she imagine that the mere touch should help her, unless He should know it, and send forth His healing power?—It was with her as it is oftentimes with some of us, who, while looking truly to the Lord Jesus as our one hope, and the ultimate source of grace, yet are prone to think of it as somehow residing in, or bound up with, external ordinances,—as if there were “virtue” in them, more or less independent of His personal presence to impart it,—instead of realising, as we ought, that though virtue may come *through them*, it can come alone *from Him*. But, though imperfect, still

4. Hers was *a strong faith*. While her views were dark as to the manner in which Christ’s healing virtue was to reach her, she set no limits to its power and efficacy. That Christ *could* heal her, and if she could only get near Him that He *would*, she entertained not a doubt. “If I but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole.” This is, indeed, often quoted as an illustration of the power and blessing even of a weak faith,—the touching of the hem being used as a type or figure of the faintest and slightest contact of the soul with Christ. And it may, doubtless, be legitimately so used by way of illustration. Still, the act as done by her was an indication not of weak but of strong faith; for it showed the conviction of such a boundless fulness of grace in Him, that a poor, dying creature could come, and, by touching His blessed person, secure the outgoing of His healing power. Her thoughts, indeed, were not occupied at all about the act

of faith ; and her soul was so filled with a sense of the plenitude of His power and grace, that she felt that nothing more was needed than simply to put herself in His way, in order that it might flow out in all its plenitude to her. Therefore, instead of resting her hope upon strong cries and vehement demonstration of misery, as if to move the heart of one unwilling to pity or to help, she said, " If I but touch His garments, I shall be whole."

And finally, It was *earnest and resolute faith*. She was resolved at all hazards and at any cost to gain her end. Nothing can arrest her ; nothing can turn her aside. She who has already spent all her living upon physicians, in the vain hope of purchasing the precious gift of health, will not be deterred by a crowd, now the prize is within her reach. Weak and wasted as she is, she will buffet with the strongest of them, rather than die within sight of the Saviour. That hard struggle will be soon forgotten when her end has been gained.

Oh, that we displayed as much earnestness in seeking the healing of our souls as this woman in seeking the healing of the body ! We, too, are in the midst of a crowd,—a crowd of cares and vanities, a crowd of lusts and sins, a crowd of idle triflers, and dreaming, gazing loiterers, thronging the way between us and the Lord, and if we would be saved, we must press through and beyond them all, with these words ringing in our ears, " What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or, What shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?"

II. *What the multitude did.* Having said so much in regard to the act of the woman, it will be the less necessary to point out the difference between her attitude and demeanour toward the Lord Jesus and that of the multitude around her. Theirs was the mere contact of the body, hers of the heart and soul ; theirs a mere external and unmeaning pressure, hers a living act of trust and love. The human eye, indeed, could detect no difference. To a mere spectator, all stood in the same relation to Him. "Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng Thee, and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?"—surely it were vain amid such a crowd, all of whom are pressing on Thee and thronging Thy path, to single out any one to whom more than another the charge may be applied. But, no : while thousands throng around the Saviour, one alone toucheth Him. Jesus answered, "*Somebody* hath touched me."

And so is it, Brethren, still, that the great multitude of men under the preached word, and even within the limits of the professing Church, only press and throng around the Saviour and never touch Him. They come before Him as His people come, and sit before Him as His people, but their hearts are far from Him. Their bodies are near, but their souls are at an infinite distance, far as east is distant from the west. Yes, Brethren, in this Christian land, where the profession of Christianity is so general, and the living reality and blessed experience of it so rare,—“Master, all men throng Thee and press Thee.”

They throng around the baptismal font. All are dedi-

cated in infant days to Him, all blessed with the Three-one name, marked and sealed with the token of everlasting life; yet how few seek or find the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost! The whole multitude of the baptized throng and press Him, but who toucheth Him?

We throng and press Him, too, in the reading of the Holy Word. How very near we come to Him every time we take that awful, blessed volume into our hands, and read those words that are the savour of life or death to all that hear them. Then do we indeed stand close beside Him, and listen to those very accents of old by the shores of Gennesaret, and in the villages of Galilee,—those words that have carried life and healing, comfort and everlasting peace to thousands around the throne. Yet how many that read them with utter listlessness and unconcern,—in whose dead, torpid souls those words of life awake no heavenward breathings, kindle no holy, hidden fire! They throng and press Him, but never touch Him.

And so too in the sanctuary and in the public assemblies of His saints. Do we not throng and press Him here? Is He not in very deed present among us? Hath He not said, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them,”—and does He not fulfil that word in the experience of all those who truly seek and wait for Him? Does He not bless the provision of Zion, and satisfy her poor with bread? Does He not beautify the meek with salvation, and make His saints shout aloud for joy? Does He not break hearts, and cleanse consciences, and revive languid grace, and subdue iniquities, and inflame holy feeling, and kindle

living hope, and breathe the peace that passeth all understanding by His mighty word and Spirit, now, as heretofore? Yet oh, what multitudes experience nothing of this! To all that is living and life-giving in the preached word they are utter strangers. They come and go, from day to day, and from year to year, unquickened, unblessed, unfed. They throng and press Him all their lives, and by their cumbering the ground keep others away, but they never touch Him.

No, not even at the Lord's table. There, if anywhere here on earth, we are brought near the Lord. What can be more nearly related to Him than those sacred memorials which He hath appointed and consecrated to all time, as the divinely constituted symbols of Himself and pledges of His love? And what outward act can bring us into such near contact with Him, and with all that is most affecting and sanctifying in the remembrance of His redeeming work, as the taking these memorials into our hands, and eating and drinking them in remembrance of Him? Then does the truly contrite and believing soul, in very deed, both with heart and hand, touch the hem of His garment. And yet, even here, Brethren, is it not true that many throng and press Him, and but few touch Him? Alas! have there not been many communion-tables, and crowded communion-tables too, in which it is to be feared that scarcely one, if any at all, hath touched Him, from which not one breathing of holy desire hath gone up to God, not one believing look turned towards the cross? God forbid that it should be so with us this day. Forbid that our communion-

roll should be such a roll of the dead, our communion-assembly such a congregation of the dead ! Rather let “the whole multitude seek to touch Him, that there may go virtue out of Him and heal us all.” But this brings me, in the last place, very briefly to consider,

III. The test to distinguish between the one and the other. Jesus saith, “Somebody hath touched me : for I perceive that *virtue hath gone out of me.*” This then was the test ; the saving touch was proved by the out-flowing of the healing virtue. There is no healing influence without faith,—no true faith without healing influence. Therefore, the fact so well known to Him who is the one source and dispenser of grace, that such influence had gone forth from Him to this woman, was the decisive and infallible proof that she had touched Him in a way that none of the throng around her had. Not, indeed, that the Omniscient One required any such practical evidence to show Him that she had indeed touched Him. Had He not before felt her touch, and recognised and owned it as the touch of faith, she never could have received the healing. His knowledge of her faith was the cause of the outgoing of the virtue, not the effect of it. But while no such evidence was needed for Him, it is by such evidence alone that it can be made manifest to others. Thus alone can we surely know that we have truly believed in Jesus to the saving of our souls, when it has become manifest to all men and ourselves that a saving virtue has come from Him to us, and that through that mighty virtue all old things are passed

away, and all things are made new. “When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.” They said, “These men *have* touched Him; for we perceive that virtue, a mighty, transforming, new-creating energy, hath gone out from Him to them.” So is it still. Sins forsaken, besetting lusts subdued, neglected duties discharged, the Sabbath prized, the Bible loved, holy society relished, time redeemed, works of usefulness undertaken, the ordinances of grace improved, the closet much frequented, a tender conscience, a loving, devoted heart, an active, willing hand, a conversation in heaven,—these are the sure tokens of salvation, and that of God,—the open evidence before the world, that at some secret moment, unnoticed by any other witness, in a day of grace and power, we drew near and touched the hem of His garment. Thus are we known to be His disciples now. Thus shall we be recognised and owned to be His disciples then, when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and shall separate the righteous from the wicked, even as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. For then shall He say to them on his right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.”

V.

FAITH'S LANGUAGE.*

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.”—LUKE xxiii. 42.

THERE are some to whom the incident of the thief on the cross must be a matter of comparative indifference. They have no difficulty at all in believing that God should receive the vilest and most hardened sinner at the very eleventh hour. Conversion at any time they deem no great marvel; least of all when the last sands of life are running out. They think it quite natural and just in the ordinary course of things that the sinner should then turn to God, and should be received. The transition from death to life is in their eyes so slight and easy an affair, as to be the brief work of an hour, or of a few hurried moments, just before they shuffle off this mortal coil and pass into the eternal world. They think that the work of a life-time may easily be done in a day; that a man may settle his accounts with God while the king of terrors is thundering at the door; that he may live the life of the sinner

* Preached before the Communion.

and die the death of the saint. It is thus they believe that most of their neighbours found salvation; it is thus that they look to find salvation themselves. Like passengers bound for a distant voyage, that linger on shore while the vessel is awaiting a favourable wind, they think they may safely remain immersed in worldly thoughts and pursuits, and dismiss from their mind all thoughts of their great voyage, and count upon being signalled on board, just as the anchors are weighed and the sails are unfurled to the breeze. There is, however, this great and fatal difference, that while the passengers *are* ready, and have nothing to do but step on board a bark where their place is secured, and all is waiting for their reception, they are *not* ready, and their calling and election are not yet made sure.

To me the matter appears in a very different light. I bless God that there is recorded in Scripture even one fact to prove that a sinner may find mercy in his last hours. It is unspeakably blessed to know, on the express authority of God, and by an actual instance written on the rocks for ever, that such a case, though rare and exceptional, is not impossible;—that the “uttermost” of the Redeemer’s compassion and power to save, reaches not only to the lowest depths of human vileness, but to the extremest limit of human life on earth. When we consider all that is implied in a sinner being saved and prepared for glory in so brief a space,—when we think of the meetness that has to be wrought, as well as the title given,—when we remember that “old things must pass away, and all things become new;” that the

fruits of long years of sin have to be neutralised in a few hours or moments; that engrained habits of evil have to be done away, vile affections transformed, new and holy principles, tastes, longings, implanted, cherished, ripened to celestial bloom, all as in the twinkling of an eye;—when we consider all this, Brethren, and remember, too, the general law of the kingdom, that he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, surely it *did* require an express testimony of the divine word to assure us that such a case may be,—that a deathbed repentance is not necessarily and in every case a visionary dream, that a man may be in the state of nature to-day, and in the state of glory to-morrow. We *have* such a testimony. Of this amazing miracle of grace we have only one recorded instance, indeed, but we have one: only one, that none may presume; but still one, that none may despair. By this signal instance first did Christ show all long-suffering, for a pattern to all in after times who, in any circumstances and in any extremity of 'sin and ruin, should truly repent and cast themselves at the foot of the cross.

The subject is not only in itself deeply affecting, but peculiarly suitable to the exercises of this day, for it sets before us the Saviour on the cross, and that in the very aspect in which He is alone most glorious and most precious in the believing sinner's eyes. We see Him at once working out the sinner's redemption and applying that redemption to the sinner, paying the ransom-price, and saving from going down to the pit; stretching wide

the wings of mercy, and drawing the perishing beneath its covert. Here we have that glorious oracle fulfilled to its utmost extent, and in all its parts,—“He was numbered with the transgressors; and He poured out His soul unto death, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Let us proceed, then, to consider briefly in succession the circumstances, the occasion, the nature, and the result of this penitent’s prayer.

I. *As to the circumstances.* They were surely as unpropitious as any in which a heavy-laden sinner ever sought the Lord. How terribly short is the time he has left to devote to the business of eternity. His whole life is gone, and now only the last sands of his day of grace are running out. He has given the vigour and the substance of his days to the service of sin and the devil, and now he has but the dregs to give to God. It is now near mid-day, and before yon sun, that is climbing to its meridian height, shall have sunk beneath the horizon, his account on earth shall have been for ever closed, and his soul gone to its own place. How strong the temptation in such circumstances to give up all for lost, to say there is no hope, and abandon himself to black despair! Shall he have sown the seeds of death all his life-long, and hope to reap life everlasting at the end; spent his days in insulting his Maker, and yet find refuge in His love at the last moment? How hard for any awakened sinner to cherish such a hope! Harder surely for him than any other after him; for they might draw encouragement, and thousands doubtless have drawn

encouragement, from the case of the dying thief, but there was no dying thief before him to encourage *him*.

Then think how hard it must have been to fix his thoughts and raise his thoughts upward at such a time ! In no case is a deathbed scene the fittest place for serious thoughts and prayer, and his was no ordinary deathbed. Think of that poor sufferer, writhing in unutterable and ceaseless agony,—his whole mangled frame a mass of living torment, as if he were tossing literally on a bed of fire,—his parched lips, his beating brow, his anguish-torn and fierce-throbbing limbs, as pulse after pulse of the labouring heart told the long hour's death,—and you will wonder that he should have been able to abstract a single thought from the dread work in hand to any other subject. Yet even then his mind was clear and his spirit strong. The urgent demands of the suffering body hindered not the upward aspirings of the soul. Grace conquered nature, faith mastered agony, and the bitter cross itself became to this peerless penitent the very footstool of mercy, the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

Let no one, then, throw on his circumstances the blame of that neglect of his soul's concerns which is all his own. Neither the distractions and cares of life nor the sufferings of a dying bed need hinder, if we are only true to ourselves, the ascent of the soul's swift messenger to heaven. The spirit that is all in earnest will press through all these obstacles. In no circumstances is salvation easy; in any case the kingdom of heaven must be taken by a holy violence; but wherever it is so sought, it is never sought in vain; and it is likely that far more

have found the Saviour on a bed of thorns, or in a great fight of afflictions, than ever found Him in hours of peace, or on the bed of down. But let us now proceed, in the second place, to glance at

II. *The occasion* of this prayer. If the situation of the dying suppliant himself was little favourable to calm thought and prayer, the external environments of the scene were scarcely more so. If there was agony within, there were distractions, manifold and harassing, all around. Never was dying chamber less guarded from the world's din and tumult, so little favourable to concentration of the soul on eternal things. A weltering mass of fierce, blaspheming men, with mad, glaring eyes, and savage cries of execration,—a black, troubled sea of basest human passions lashed into foam, and casting up mire and dirt,—such was the scene that met his eye on every side,—such the sights and sounds that encompassed the poor sufferer, and that shocked and stunned his aching senses during his few remaining hours on earth. Even the fellow-malefactor that hangs by his side catches the general frenzy, and, poor mimic of the scoffing multitude, casts in his feeble mite into the general sum of impious mockery: “If Thou be the Son of God,” said he, while his pale, dying lips formed themselves for a moment into a faint, ghastly sneer—“If Thou be the Son of God, save Thyself and us.” Thus not only did hell lie all about him, but close to him, at his very side, vexing his soul with impious blasphemies, and almost shrouding from view the blessed form on

which he is striving to fix his eye, in a cloud of contumely and scorn. Yet even these adverse circumstances were turned, through the mighty power of grace, into an instrument of good. Those hell-blasts of satanic impiety, that might have extinguished the feeble spark of faith altogether, only fanned it into a flame. The poorest of his wretched companion became the occasion of his noble confession and prayer. Hitherto he had been silent, sunk in deep reverie, shut up in the secrecy of his own thoughts,—but that bold, bad speech roused him up. An indignant sense of outrageous wrong stirred his bosom, and broke into a flame the latent fire of contrition and love that smouldered within his heart. Startled and shocked, not only to hear those words of blasphemy from the very last lips from which he could have expected them to come, but to find himself mixed up by implication in the heartless sneer, he hastens at once to rebuke the crime, and to repudiate all participation in it. His silence hitherto had probably been mistaken, and led to the surmise that both malefactors alike had shared in the general mockery, but now he can keep silence no longer. He must either roll back by an indignant protest the vile sneer, or by silent connivance make it his own. Accordingly, with a strong effort, he turns himself round on his cross, and casting on his wretched companion a look of mingled rebuke and pity, exclaimed, in those noble words which will remain memorable through all time, “Dost not thou fear God,”—thou of all men, thou in such circumstances, and at such an hour as this, “seeing thou art in the same condemnation” with Him? Surely

His character as a fellow-sufferer, to say no more, might shield Him from such cruel and wounding taunts, at least from thee,—“And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds ; but this man hath done nothing amiss.” Noble confession ! well and bravely spoken, and at the right place and time. Jesus needed a witness at this moment, some one to speak for Him, while He as a lamb bore all those wrongs in silence ; and He found one, not in a disciple, but in a dying thief. Peter, John, Mary, are silent ; the crucified felon speaks. O wondrous miracle of grace ! O first and noblest of confessors ! called forth to speak a good word for God and His Christ at this the grandest moment of all time, not from the ranks of the faithful, but from the throng of the publicans and sinners. O most sovereign and unsearchable love of God, how dost Thou put the first last and the last first, put down the mighty from their seats and exalt them of low degree ! How dost Thou lift the poor out of the dunghill and set him with princes, even the princes of the people ! God of Rahab, God of Manasseh, God of the Magdalene, the thief, the persecutor,—who need despair while Thou reignest, and art still, as of old, rich unto all that call upon Thee, able to save unto the uttermost ?—This was the very turning point in the man’s salvation. Then, and by that word, did he take his ground openly and fairly on God’s side against the devil and sin. Then did he cast in his lot with the crucified One in the face of a scorning, scoffing world, and by this act began to suffer for Christ as well as to suffer with Him,—from a felon became a martyr. It was the

first righteous and noble thing he had ever done for God or man, and marked the commencement of a new career, soon, indeed, to be cut short on earth, but to be continued and consummated for evermore in heaven.—But he is not satisfied with merely rebuking his companion's blasphemy, he hastens to cast himself at the Saviour's feet whom he blasphemed. This brings us to our third head of discourse, viz.

III. The *nature* of the prayer itself. “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom.”—The first thing that strikes us in this prayer is its *brevity*. It could not but be so. There was no time for many words, for vain repetitions, for needless circumlocutions of phrase, or ornaments of diction; it must go directly to the point, like an arrow to its mark. So is it even in the highest acts of supplication; in those moments of intense earnestness, when the spirit casts its deepest glance within the veil, and wins the mightiest victories at the throne. Then the kingdom of heaven suffers violence as by a grand assault, and an assault ever sudden, swift, decisive. Such prayers are the soul's swift arrows, glowing sparks thrown off from the burning heat, gleaming for a moment, then vanishing out of sight. “I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.”—“I am oppressed, undertake for me.”—“Lord, save me, I perish.”—Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief.”—Such are a few of those winged darts of faith, gathered up from the field of the word, and which have been used again and again by successive combatants in

the good fight. Such an one is that of the text, a short, sharp cry of a child of grace, in the moment of its birth.

But *how comprehensive!* If the words are few, how pregnant and vast is the sense! It is an act of worship. "*Lord, remember me.*" He acknowledged that marred and mangled sufferer as the Lord of life and glory, and casts himself adoring at His feet. Beneath the guise of the crucified malefactor, he recognised and owned the Christ of God, the present King of Israel, the King, too, of no earthly and carnal empire, such as the Jewish people dreamed, but of a kingdom immortal and unseen, beyond the dominion of the grave, and eternal in the heavens. Whence this knowledge? Whence this wonderful faith, and equally wonderful discernment, at which He who marvelled at the centurion's faith, must surely have marvelled no less? How did he learn to "call Jesus Lord?" to think of Him, his fainting, dying fellow-sufferer, as able to help and succour him in his great extremity? to conceive even the idea of a kingdom beyond the grave? Who was his teacher, we well know; and marvellous often is the progress of those who learn in His school. Keen and far-piercing are the glances of the Spirit-quicken'd soul into divine realities at the moment of its first awakening, especially when there is much to learn, and little time to learn it; and in such a case the slow discoveries of years may be crowded into a day or an hour. So was it, doubtless, with this man. It is enough to say that the Divine Spirit opened his eyes, and revealed to his soul the glory of Christ, the majesty of the indwelling Deity

shining out through, and, as it were, transfiguring the shame of the cross. Even the very shouts and cries of His enemies may have been the means, in God's hands, of darting in this divine knowledge into his soul. Much had been said—albeit in mockery—of Christ as a King during the whole transactions of the day. The accusation before Pilate, the maddened shout of the people, the crown of thorns, the purple robe, the title on the cross,—all spake of His claim to this title of dignity, and may have combined to bring home this idea of Christ to the penitent's soul. Like all Jews he expected the appearance of a Messiah in this character. Might not this be He? May not the name cast upon Him in derision belong to Him of right? And then, as these thoughts pass through his mind, he turns again,—and, as the stately image of the adorable sufferer rises before his soul, His majesty in meanness, His glory in the midst of shame, His godlike patience and serenity, His love undying, His prayer for His very murderers, and that imperial air of conscious greatness and self-sustaining strength which all the shame of the cross could not conceal,—the whole truth flashed in upon him like a revelation from God, and he fell down prostrate and adoring, in spirit and words like those of Thomas, “My Lord and my God.”

Then, it was *an act of supplication*, and, as such, how comprehensive, how all-embracing! “Lord, *remember me.*” What needed blessing, what conceivable gift and work of divine grace is not included in it? “I need not dictate to Him what to do for me. He knows

it all,—knows all my need, all the extremity of my case,—and He knows well the kind of succour and help I need; enough if He remembers me, if He thinks of me, if in the hour of His exaltation and glory He do not forget the poor sufferer that once hung by His side.” And so he simply, wholly, casts himself on the great Redeemer’s power and grace; feebly, tremblingly indeed, with a faith which yet was but as the grain of mustard seed, yet truly, effectually; and the germ of a conviction already springs up within his heart, that He to whom he thus committed his soul was able, and as willing as able, to keep that which he committed unto Him against that day. For, in faith, he did anticipate that day, and solemnly pondered the issues of it. “Remember me,” he says, “when Thou comest in Thy kingdom:”—“*in* Thy kingdom,” the words are not, as in our version, “*into* Thy kingdom;”—and the meaning is not when Thou enterest into Thy kingdom, but when Thou comest again as King,—in Thy kingly majesty, glory, power.

“The Lord shall come ! but not the same
As once in lowliness He came,
A silent lamb before His foes,
A weary man, and full of woes.

“The Lord shall come ! a dreadful form
In wrath of flame, and robe of storm,
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,
Appointed judge of all mankind.”

This was the faith that was already dawning as a bright morning-star within his heart. That day of days, that day of decision and of doom, the day at once of

redemption and vengeance, that day bright yet dreadful, when to the wicked the fiery oven shall burn, and to the just the sun of righteousness shall arise,—such was the vision, awful but glorious, that now arose before his mind's eye; and so, in expectation of it, and that it might be a day of joy and not a day of woe to him, he pleads that in that tremendous hour the Lord of all power and mercy might remember him.

IV. A few words must suffice for our fourth and closing head,—*the success of this prayer*. Nor are many words necessary: the answer of the Lord abundantly speaks for itself. If any words were ever engraven deep and large on the rock for ever, emblazoned in letters of light and glory on the sacred page, so that the dimmest eye may read and understand, they are these.

How prompt, how immediate was the Saviour's reply to the cry of the penitent! No sooner is the prayer offered than it is answered. While he is yet speaking, the Redeemer hears. He is in haste to meet the returning prodigal, and present him with the blessings of His goodness, the seals of His pardoning love.

Then, see *how ample* it is, how the answer shoots far beyond, and immeasurably transcends the measure of the request. The suppliant had prayed that the Saviour would, some time, remember him;—if he mentioned a day at all, it was a day far distant, a day shrouded in the darkness and mystery of the inscrutable future, the day of the winding up of all things, when He should come in His kingdom. The Lord replies, “Not then but now,

not on a far distant morrow, but *to-day*;—not when I come, but even now, when I go. I am now on the very eve of entering into glory, and thou, but a brief hour afterwards, shalt follow me.”

Then, he had only asked to be “*remembered*,”—that from the height of His glory He would deign to cast a look of mercy on him, though far away, separated, it might be, by an immeasurable gulf from the place where His glory should dwell. “Not so,” said the Saviour, “I shall not only remember thee, but thou shalt be with me,—I will that thou be with me where I am, and that thou behold my glory evermore.” “*In Thy kingdom!*” says the suppliant,—“Yes!” says the gracious Redeemer, “but not only then. In that day indeed, thy blessedness and that of all the redeemed shall be perfected in the redemption of the body, and the abolition of death and the grave,—but though only consummated then, it shall be begun even now; this very day thou shalt be in Paradise, in the glorious seat of ‘spirits made perfect,’ in the bright beatific garden of souls; in the unseen realm of rest and peace, where one by one they are gathering, in imperfect but ineffable felicity, waiting for their complete consummation and bliss till all their brethren are come, and the nuptial bond is complete. Then shall the dawning morn of Paradise give place to the perfect, everlasting day of glory.”

In conclusion, Brethren, we learn from this subject:—

1. The sovereignty of divine grace. “One is taken, and the other left.” Two malefactors die the same death of shame for the same crime, the one on the one

side, and the other on the other of the Saviour. The one seeks mercy, and is saved; and the other remains impious to the last, and goes down blaspheming to hell.

2. How much divine grace may do in a little time. How does it refine the rudest natures, exalt the most ignoble, create a soul within the very breasts of the dead, often almost in the twinkling of an eye. Think of the dying robber, but yesterday a child of the devil, to-day a saint ripe for glory,—and never despair, while the day of salvation lasts, of the grace of God.

3. What a wonderful and divine thing is faith! How clear its discernment! how keen and far-piercing its eagle eye! How does it see beneath the outward masks and shows of things, look into the very heart of them, measure their real worth and value as with the balance and in the light of God. Look at this poor, untutored robber, learning more by a single glance of the eye, than apostles and disciples had learned at Christ's lips during a fellowship of years,—seeing a glory in the cross, and in Him who hung on it, where they could see only shame and darkness and despair,—looking forward in blessed hope to the coming kingdom, when to them that kingdom seemed to vanish from before their eyes as a dream; and thus learn how true are those words of Scripture, that what “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, God hath revealed unto His own by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” Pray, Brethren, for the divine illumination, that He who at first caused the light to

shine out of darkness may shine in your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

4. Learn once more, that presumption and despair in a death hour are alike discountenanced here,—the one in the impenitent thief, the other in his penitent fellow. God will receive us at the last hour, if we truly repent; but the grace to repent may not then be given,—therefore, “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.”

In conclusion, If it be a good thing to find Christ at the last, it is a still better thing to find Christ early; if good to die in Christ, better to live for him; if good to be even “scarcely saved,” better to “have an abundant entrance;”—if good to be cast even as a helpless wreck on the heavenly shore, better still to enter full sail, and amid shouts of glad welcome, into the everlasting harbour. May this be your case and mine; and after a long life spent for Him on earth, may we come home at last from the vineyard of toil to the paradise of rest, with those gracious words sounding in our ears, “Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

VI.

THE SPIRIT'S "FRUIT"—MANIFOLD, YET ONE.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."—GAL. v. 22, 23.

BEFORE considering the fruits of the Spirit in detail, there are one or two remarks of a general kind which it may be desirable to premise. *First*, Various and manifold as these graces of the Spirit are, they are all, nevertheless, in principle and in essence, one. They proceed from the same source; they are but so many manifestations of the same divine and heavenly life. The "one Spirit" animates and informs them all. Just as the clear sunlight may be divided by the prismatic lens into a rich variety of coloured rays, and yet is in itself one,—one bright, ethereal, glorious essence,—so that, as soon as the disturbing medium is removed, the separate rays run into each other again, and blend in one burning, dazzling beam,—so is it here. In its essence holiness, or the blessed unity of all the graces, is Love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." "Love is the fulfilling of the law."—"The end of the commandment is love." Here is the heavenly light as it streams, pure and undivided, from the throne

of God and of the Lamb. But now the prism of the word is applied to it; or shall we rather say the prism of experience and of actual life,—and then that clear, white light dissolves into a glorious spectrum of many-coloured rays, each, as it were, melting into the other, as the red into the orange, the orange into the yellow, the yellow into the green, and so through all the rest: “The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace,” &c.

Secondly. Though varied, they have, even in their separation, a manifest affinity to one another. We cannot read the text, however cursorily, without feeling this. We feel that while each has its own distinctive quality, they are all homogeneous graces. They all belong to the number of what may be called the gentle, loving virtues. They are evidently not a mere company of strangers, gathered together at random, but a family,—a holy sisterhood, bearing a family likeness the one to the other. Look along the bright row as they stand now, side by side before you, and say if it be not so. Love, is she not the sister, you might say the twin-sister, of Joy? Is there not the same smile, the same rapt seraphic look, on the countenance of both? And Joy, is she not the nearest of kin to Peace? and Peace to Patience, and Patience to Gentleness, Goodness, Faith? And as they are like one another, and are sisters, they love to dwell together in holy fellowship within the sanctuary of the same pure heart; and their voices blend in divine harmony, as only the voices of sisters do.

Let us now, however, glance briefly at the distinctive

character of each, in the order in which they are here enumerated.

"The fruit of the Spirit is *love*,"—love in the largest sense,—love to God, love to Christ, love to the brethren, love to all mankind. Most fitly is this precious grace mentioned first, for she is the first-born of the daughters of the King, and she is herself the queen of all the graces. Of all the celestial family she has most of the image of her Father,—and most, too, of His heart, for "God is love." And therefore, wherever she is seen, and in whatever work she is engaged, she may be always known for His child. You may know her by her bright eye, her calm, seraphic smile, her tender, gentle voice, and by her nimble step and busy hand, ever ready for works of kindness and of mercy. She had a Brother once,—an Elder Brother, far nobler and fairer than herself, even "the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely,"—and that Brother had given His life for His brethren, had given His life for her; and so the image of that Brother lives in her heart, and her great ambition and desire is to be like Him, and to walk in His steps, and thus at last to dwell with Him in that bright realm of love whither He hath gone before. If you wish to know her better, you will find a portrait of her, drawn from the life, by a great master, and hung up for the instruction and delight of the Church in every age, in one of the goodly chambers of the House of God. Here it is,—let us gaze upon it till we drink in each line and shade of its celestial beauty, and are ourselves changed into the same image:—"Charity

suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

"The fruit of the Spirit is *joy*." How closely allied joy is to love, all experience tells. In fact, you cannot have love but it will bring joy in its train. The one is identified with the other, as light and heat in the same solar beam. Joy is the complacency or delight which one has in anything that is good and desirable, and chief of all in that which we dearly love,—as God, Christ, heaven, the happiness of brethren. It is therefore quite distinct from mere pleasure. Pleasure consists in the gratification of a momentary desire,—an appetite or passion of the flesh ; hence it perishes in the very act of enjoyment. With a single flash it burns itself out, and expires like "the crackling of thorns," to which the wise man compares the mirth of fools. But true joy is immortal, everlasting. Having a real and permanent object of complacency, it will endure while that object itself endures. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." While God, therefore, lives and the divine channel of blessed intercourse with Him remains, the fountain of the believer's joy can never run dry ; and so he can walk on through life, amid broken cisterns, and withered leaves, singing, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom,—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

"The fruit of the Spirit is *peace*." Peace is so like joy that one might almost mistake the one for the other, and be inclined to say that peace is just joy in its tranquil mood. One might say that what a calm smile is to a merry song, such is the grace of peace to the grace of joy. Yet there is a real distinction between them, not of degree only, but of kind. Joy is the complacency the soul feels in what is positively good ; peace the blessed consciousness of immunity from evil. Peace, the sense of being saved from hell,—joy, the sense of being an heir of heaven. Yet ranking it at the very lowest, and allowing that it is in its nature mainly negative, what a blessed thing is peace ! What music is there in the very name ! How shall we describe it ? How shall we convey to those who know nothing of this heavenly gift some idea of what it is ? Shall I say it is like the silent cloud that floats amid the glory of the setting sun ?—or like the still lake slumbering within the embrace of the everlasting hills ?—or like the frail skiff lately tossed by the surge, but now quiet and at rest within the land-locked bay ?—or like the soft evening dew, or like the calm, deep, broad river, or like an infant sleeping on its mother's breast,—or like the brow of Jesus ? These things do indeed whisper to us of peace, faintly image to us its nature and its blessedness,—but, oh ! to know it we must taste it. We must "taste and see that the Lord is good." We must come to Jesus Himself, and receive from His own blessed hand that rest,—that peace which He hath purchased with His blood, and which it is His prerogative to

bestow. Then shall our hearts become the very nest of the Holy Dove, and all our lifelong, more and more, “the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.”—“Come unto Me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” Thus the Holy Dove flutters evermore round and round the cross, and rests on the head of him who bends in lowly, contrite, believing supplication there.

“The fruit of the Spirit is *long-suffering*,”—just peace in the midst of suffering, and in spite of it,—peace in the midst of ignominy, insult, wrong, mockery, persecution, and all else that can try the patience, and fret and wound the heart;—the inward calm amid the outward storm, the great peace of the upright soul which nothing can offend, and which keeps the heart and mind unharmed, when the arrows of death are flying all around. It is the sublime victory of the steadfast soul, alike over the world and over himself, of one who out of weakness “is strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness.”

“The fruit of the Spirit is *gentleness*,”—rather kindness, or “that benevolence and sweetness of disposition, which finds its sphere and exercise in our intercourse with one another;”—a gracious benignity of look, speech, and behaviour, which is the very opposite of everything rude, harsh, and unfeeling. It is thus well described by one of the old Fathers, who was himself

rather deficient in it, as a "gentle virtue, winning, tranquil, affable, inviting familiarity, gracious in speech, modest in behaviour;" and thus distinguished from, though often interchanged with, that sterner goodness which is of a sadder aspect, and frequently wears a clouded brow at the very time it confers a benefit or grants a prayer. It is the very spirit of Him of whom it was written that "He should not strive, nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the streets,"—who "broke not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax,"—who drew the publicans and the sinners round Him, and took the little children in His arms.

"The fruit of the Spirit is *goodness*,"—exactly what in common speech we mean by the term—the disposition (as one has expressed it) to will and to do that which is good, good in itself and good to others. It is to be imitators of God, as dear children,—of Him of whom it is said that "He is good and doeth good,"—essentially good in His own nature, and the fountain of all goodness and blessing to every creature He hath made,—"the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift." It thus includes all manner of beneficence and benevolence in the best sense; expansive, generous, large-hearted interest in whatever concerns the good of man, the diffusion of happiness, the extension of the Church, and the triumph of truth and righteousness on the earth. It manifests itself ever in a disposition and endeavour to be useful and to do good; to bear a hand in any good work that is going on. It is a homely working grace; not expanding itself in mere

sentiment, or losing itself in flights of high enthusiasm, but busying itself in active work in God's Church and in God's world. To this class belong the honourable company of the Dorcas, and Phœbes, and Tryphenas, and Tryphosas, and Persis' of old time, but who have had their worthy successors in every after age,—those true sisters of charity so often to be seen in prisons, and in sick chambers, and in infirmaries, and in houses of mourning, and in the gloomy garrets and cellars of the neglected and the forlorn. To it belong also workers of another and grander mould,—the great public heroes and champions of philanthropy in the open arena of the world; those true "Great Hearts" of humanity and of the Church of God, who, like Paul, Luther, Howard, Wilberforce, Chalmers, have fought a gallant and successful fight against the sins and sorrows of the world.

"The fruit of the Spirit is *faith*,"—here to be taken in the largest sense, and not to be confined to that special and first act of faith which unites the soul to Christ, and which, strictly speaking, is not so much one of the fruits of the Spirit, as the root of them all. Here it is trustfulness,—in the widest sense a believing, confiding, hopeful spirit alike towards God and man,—the bright sunshine of a soul that is at peace with the world, itself, and God, and that lives in the assurance that if God be for him, none can be against him. It is the spirit which utters itself in such words as these,—“I will hope continually, and will yet praise Him more and more.”—“God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.”—“My God shall supply all my need according to His riches in glory

by Christ Jesus."—"So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Thus it looks towards God,—while towards man it cherishes thoughts rather of trust than of suspicion, in the spirit of Godlike charity, "believing all things, hoping all things."

"The fruit of the Spirit is *meekness*,"—one of the softer and more delicate touches that go to constitute the perfect image of Christ,—often sadly wanting when other graces of the Spirit are eminently displayed. It is not easy to combine with that holy ardour, zeal, energy, faithfulness, and unflinching boldness in behalf of truth and righteousness, which become "a good soldier of Jesus Christ," that serene and chastened gentleness, that ornament of a "meek and quiet spirit," which imparted such an inexpressible charm to the character of Jesus himself! Hard, very hard is it to unite the boldness of the lion with the gentleness of the lamb. Amid the impetuous ardour especially of young disciples is this element often wanting. It is only in the mellow fruit of a holy old age, or in those whose ripening has been hastened on by suffering and sorrow that this exquisite flavour is usually, in its full perfection, found.

And now, last of all,

"The fruit of the Spirit is *temperance*." As Love in this catalogue is mentioned first, so as fitly and significantly is Temperance mentioned last. For as the one is the soul of all duty, so the other is its strong sinew and nerve. The one is the motive, the other the regulative and conservative principle of the divine life.

Love makes us willing, eager, joyfully strenuous in the service of God—Temperance makes us strong. It is the soul's girdle, the soul's rein, the soul's balance-wheel, the soul's helm, the soul's severe but salutary discipline, which prepares it as a good soldier to fight its battle, as a strong man to run its race. If it be not itself one of the fair flowers in God's garden, it is at least the firm fence that guards it round and shields all its bright blossoms from harm. Even the heathen Plato could, in his sublime fancy, figure the soul in its fateful career of moral progress as a chariot, drawn by two fiery steeds of contrary natures and dispositions, the one black, the other white, the one plunging and tearing downwards, the other struggling upwards, and so itself either soaring aloft to the realms of light, or sinking down to the abyss of darkness, according as under the guiding and controlling hand of the charioteer the one or the other prevails. It is easy to give a Christian turn to this pregnant allegory. Conscience, informed and sustained by the grace of God, is the charioteer, and temperance is the firm bridle hand, that at once restrains the passions of the flesh, and gives loose rein to every high and holy impulse. It is thus a virtue very comprehensive in its scope; inclusive not only of temperance in the ordinary modern sense of the term, but of self-restraint and self-control in the widest and largest sense,—purity, chastity, sobriety of thought and action, self-denial, government of the temper, government of the tongue, government of the appetites and passions, government even of the holiest affections and desires, which else will run to dan-

gerous extremes, and manifest themselves in morbid and disordered forms. "He that striveth for masteries must be temperate *in all things*." He must not only keep under the body, but discipline and control also the more subtle movements of the soul, and bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ. The whole stream of the new and heavenly life must flow within the firm and inviolable barriers of a holy and resolute temperance. What are the ten commandments themselves, in the negative and prohibitory form in which it has pleased God to give them, the "Thou shalt not kill,"—"Thou shalt not steal,"—"Thou shalt not commit adultery,"—but so many loud calls to the exercise of this grace, so many solemn mementoes of how much of our Christian warfare and service here must lie in resistance, in self-conflict, in denying ourselves?

Learn, in conclusion, from this rapid survey, four valuable lessons :

A lesson of *self-examination*. "Fruits of the Spirit" grow not in the soil of *nature*. Wild flowers and garden flowers are like, but they are also unlike, in beauty, in fragrance, in duration.

A lesson of *encouragement*. "In me is thy fruit found." "All things possible with God."

A lesson of *incitement*. How far behind are we ! How much have we still to learn ! Hold up this glass before you day by day, to rebuke your remaining deformity, and stimulate to a closer following and imitation of Christ.

A lesson of *hope*. Blessed world ! in which all these graces shall be perfect and shall be everlasting,—all but

patience and temperance ; because they shall be then no longer necessary,—no injury or sorrow will there be to bear, no unholy passion to control. Then, our earthly battles over, we shall hang those weapons of our warfare on the wall, and love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness shall dwell together in that bright untroubled realm, where “the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.”

VII.

JACOB'S WRESTLE.

“I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”—GENESIS xxxii. 26.

TWENTY years of mingled joy and sorrow have passed away, since Jacob arose a new man from his wondrous dream, and entered in earnest on the pilgrim's course of faith and patience, of which he was so illustrious a pattern. That course, like that of every one who before or since has trod the same path, has been a chequered one; yet, on the whole, it has been prosperous beyond the usual lot of men. The God of Bethel has been with him, and has kept him in all places whither he has gone. The web of his life has been variegated with many colours, but the bright threads of blessing have largely preponderated over the darker lines, and imparted the prevailing hue to the whole. “Goodness and mercy,” albeit sometimes veiled and disguised to sense, have followed him hitherto all the days of his pilgrim-life. How vast the change over the whole complexion of his circumstances and prospects since he last traversed this border-land several years ago! Then a lonely wayfarer on the world's highway,—he is now the honoured head of a numerous family, and dwells surrounded by happy

faces and loving hearts. Before, a poor outcast wanderer, with no companion but his pilgrim-staff, no possession but the promise of his God,—he is now a powerful shepherd-prince, rich in flocks and herds. Thus far, then, and amply has the Lord fulfilled the promise made to him at Bethel. And now another and still sweeter part of that promise is on the eve of its accomplishment.

The God who has been with him at Padan-aram is at last, according to His word, bringing him again to his fatherland. He is even now nearing the confines of that heritage of promise, and the warm memories of Bethel and of Beersheba gather thick around his heart. The shadow of the Almighty is over his head. The angel of His presence goes before, and all things seem to work together toward the fulfilment of his highest hopes, and to confirm to his heart the divine assurance that He would never leave him, until He had done all that which He had spoken to him of.

Such was the bright side : but there was a dark side too. Over all that cheering prospect a deep portentous shadow rested still. Esau still lives, and his deep and well-deserved revenge was yet unappeased. The ghost of Jacob's old sins still haunted his path and now silently starts up like a spectre in his way. Even in Padan-aram, when far beyond the reach of his brother's anger, the retributive consequences of his sin against that brother seem still to pursue him in chastisements peculiarly appropriate to the crime. The deceiver is himself deceived. The selfish and overreaching sup-

planter meets at last with one more selfish and over-reaching than himself. The undutiful son and brother becomes the victim of an unjust and cruel father. The stealer of the birthright and the blessing has himself stolen from his bosom the dearest jewel of his heart; and even when that jewel is restored,—when Rachel is indeed given to him, it is in circumstances which rendered the boon rather a curse than a blessing,—introducing into his house and his family life an element of dissension and bitterness, the consequences of which he never survived.

Thus even when separated by a distance of four hundred miles from Esau, Jacob's sin against Esau finds him out and scourges him. But now the dread avenger of his great transgression meets him in his proper person. The man he had so foully wronged is about to confront him face to face, and to settle once for all the long-standing account. The crisis is as inevitable as it is dreadful. The command of that very God who has been hitherto his guardian and his guide shuts him up to the meeting. Before, he fled in terror from the presence of this roaring lion; but now the force of circumstances, and the very decree of heaven, seems to drive him straight into that lion's den. Feeble and defenceless, as all criminals are, he goes to meet an adversary clothed not with physical power merely, but with that awful and irresistible might which a righteous cause imparts. Jacob, the self-convicted culprit, cowers and trembles before Esau his avenger and judge. He fears Esau's power; he fears his own sin still more. The glance of

that injured brother's eye is more terrible to him than all his armed men.

Such, then, was the dread emergency,—the most trying and critical moment, perhaps, in all the patriarch's life. But he knows whither to betake himself in the time of trouble. Helpless,—bereft of all resource in himself,—and without a word to offer in arrest of that judgment which seemed impending,—he casts himself, in the simplicity of faith and in an agony of prayer, upon the mercy and faithfulness of his God. In the passage before us, we have the history of a battle and of a victory, the noblest battle in which mortal man can be engaged, and the most glorious victory, the battle of love against hatred—the victory of weakness over strength. Let us glance in succession,—first, at the warning that preceded the battle,—second, the preparation,—third, the combat itself,—and, finally, the victory.

I. *The warning.* The great conflict did not come without some solemn premonitions of its approach. Special comforts often precede and prepare the way for times of special trial. They are the shadows which the dark forms of coming events often cast before them. So was it in the case of our Lord Himself in the days of His earthly warfare. The open heaven and the descending dove and the baptismal blessing at the Jordan, were the immediate precursors of the temptation in the wilderness; and then, again, at its awful close, the transfiguration prepared the way for the cross, and the Man of sorrows went straight from the upper chamber to the

garden of agony. So was it with the patriarch here. On the very eve of his great battle with a mortal foe, the veil of the eternal world is for a moment drawn, and he has a glimpse of those unseen armies of the sky that are to be his allies and guardians in the strife. Called to combat alone against the most terrible enemy on earth, he is given to see that all heaven is behind him. "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim," that is, "Two hosts," referring, doubtless, to the feeble host on this side the veil—a host of helpless women and children set in array against armed men,—and the invincible host of heaven—the chariots of fire and horses of fire on the other. Whether these celestial legions made any articulate communication to the patriarch, we are not told; whether they came with a special message from the God of armies for the guidance of His servant in that trying emergency, or whether in solemn silence they only appeared for a moment and then vanished out of sight, like the shining hosts on the ladder that without voice or sound passed and repassed up and down its radiant stairs, we have no express information. It is most probable, however, that the latter was the case. There is no hint in the sacred narrative of anything beyond a simple appearance, and, therefore, it is most natural to conclude that there was nothing more. Nor does it appear that anything more was necessary. The simple sight of those celestial guards, and the knowledge, that, though unseen, they

were ever hovering near his path, and would accompany him on the morrow to the scene of his great conflict, was enough to fire his heart with courage, and prepare him for every emergency. It was to him what the knowledge of strong reserves at hand, or the irresistible reinforcements appearing within sight, are to a struggling army in the field. The Prussian succours at Waterloo, even though they had not struck a single blow, would yet have decided, by their very presence, the fortune of the day. Jacob feels that though feeble in himself, the omnipotence of God is behind him, and on that he can lean as against a wall of rock. I have said that God's host after appearing for a little, probably vanished almost immediately out of sight; nor do we hear of them again appearing visibly on the scene. No matter. Jacob knows and feels that they are there, and the whole might of their unseen presence enters into his soul. Like the scent of flowers borne to seaward by the breeze that tells the midnight voyagers how near they are to the shore, or the gleam of his cottage window to the belated traveller,—such was this passing vision to Jacob, telling him that though hid by a thin veil of sense, home and friends are near. And so with good courage and with strong heart he goes on his way. He feels henceforth that he is the leader, not of one, but of two hosts, and he can go forward on that dark journey, saying, “If God be for me, who can be against me? For Thou, Lord, art a shield unto me, my glory, and the lifter up of my head. I will not be afraid though thousands of people should set themselves against me round about.”

II. *The preparation.* Like a wise general on the eve of battle, Jacob proceeds without delay to make the needful dispositions. To this duty he addresses himself immediately on the withdrawal of the angels. The assurance of heavenly succour does not supersede or for a moment suspend the use of human means. His arrangements were mainly threefold. *First*, Having beforehand sent forward messengers to reconnoitre the ground, and ascertain the movements and probable intentions of the enemy, and having received a report which warned him to prepare for the worst, he divides his little company into two bands in such a way, as, in the event of a hostile encounter, would enable them to meet the danger with the greatest advantage (v. 7). It was the act of a wise commander, who is ever averse to peril all on one venture,—who makes one part of his available forces an outlying rampart to the rest, and even deems it better, in case of stern necessity, to sacrifice a part, rather than peril the loss of the whole. Had Esau, in his unappeasable fury, fallen upon the first company, his revenge had been fully satiated long before he had finished the slaughter, and the quick relentings of his better nature would have made him ready, even eager, to spare the rest. Then *secondly*, He gives himself to prayer. This was his great strength; this was his main battle. It was to him like the charmed locks of Samson, or the mysterious Ark so terrible to their enemies borne of old by Israel into the battlefield. “O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to

thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Let us, in our seasons of darkness and distress, follow in this, above all, the example of Jacob. One heart-prayer in the hour of need is of mightier avail than ten thousand armed men. Then *thirdly*, He accompanied prayer to God with the use of the likeliest means to propitiate the wrath, and win the heart of his brother (*vv.* 13-21). Thus, as the warfare, on his side at least, was to be one, not of force, but of love, the proper weapons of warfare were kind words and gracious deeds. And so the first detachment which he pushed forward in advance to meet the enemy were armed, not with sword and buckler, but with gentle messages and right royal gifts. The event showed how well he had judged,—how much easier it was to vanquish Esau's heart than to break his arm; how much better to melt an enemy than to crush him; that that iron hate which all the hammers of the world will only harden, will become soft and pliable at once in the furnace-heat of love. And now all is ready, and as the shadows of night gather around them, the members

of the little encampment lie down in scattered groups, and prepare themselves to rest.

III. *The battle.* Jacob too, perhaps, lies down, but not to sleep. The anxious father courts repose in vain. Busy thought, never more restlessly active than at the dead hour of night, keeps his eyes waking, and suggests yet other precautions to be taken against the morrow. The encampment has not yet crossed the river; and there will be some delay, in consequence, in commencing their march in the morning. Would it not be better to effect the passage now, and thus have everything in readiness, without hurry or confusion, to start at break of day? He rises accordingly, and taking his staff in his hand he first crosses the ford alone to ascertain the depth of the water, and then, having found it easily practicable, he returns and sends the whole encampment across before him. He remains alone, but not to sleep. "To everything," saith the wise man, "there is a season, and time for everything that is done under the sun," and Jacob wisely judged that to him, at least, this was not a time to sleep. Had no burden rested on him but that which concerned himself, he might, indeed, as at Bethel, have freely abandoned himself to weariness and slumber, saying, as he laid himself down on the dewy ground, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." But that was at the time when his staff was his only companion, and no life to guard and defend but that of his own young buoyant frame,—whereas now the lives of

a numerous company of helpless women and children hang upon his care ; and, therefore, he must watch while they sleep,—watch just that they may sleep secure. His eye must watch, his thoughts must care for them,—while they, stretched on the silent ground, free from all care, resign themselves to the sweet abandonment of rest. So “Jacob was left alone,”—alone in the darkness, on the other side of the stream, even as our Jacob too, the true and ever-prevailing Prince with God, keeps watch and vigil evermore for us within the veil, while we, His helpless flock, remain sleeping or waking, toiling or struggling, on the other side of the great river. What a touching though faint emblem was Jacob on this occasion of that great Shepherd of the sheep that never slumbereth nor sleepeth while a single lamb of His flock remains exposed to the roaring lion !

“And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day !” Taking this whole scene, in its broad features, as they lie before us in the narrative, there are one or two things which, amid much that is mysterious, appear to us to be plain.

First, The glorious Being who here appears to Jacob, is manifestly the Angel of the Covenant, the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity, in form and appearance as a man, even as afterwards, in the fulness of time, He became manifest in our very flesh and blood.

Secondly, The manifestation was such that Jacob not only seemed to see the mysterious form with his eyes, but to come into contact also with Him by the sense of touch, for he embraced and grappled with Him in mys-

terious conflict, as one strong man wrestles with another. How all this was accomplished, in a scene where everything was miraculous and supernatural, it is of course needless to inquire. A more important and interesting question is as to the essential nature and meaning of the contest itself,—and perhaps we do not greatly err in conceiving of it somewhat as follows:—

Jacob while pleading alone upon his knees for the safety of his little flock, and the divine succour and blessing amid the trying scenes of the morrow, becomes conscious of another presence near, and lifting up his eyes beholds a glorious form of more than earthly majesty approaching. He recognises, or thinks that he recognises, the mysterious stranger as none other than the Angel of the Divine presence, the same that appeared to Adam in the cool of the day, and to Abraham at the tent door of Mamre. He hails the sign as a token for good, and concludes that his prayer is heard. He hastens to throw himself at the Divine stranger's feet, and supplicate from his own lips an assurance of the fact. "Oh, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, that Thou wouldst assure me that Thou art indeed with me, that Thou wilt never leave me, that Thou wilt stand by my side, in the great hour of trial that is near at hand!" The Angel hears, but answers not,—He moves, as if about to depart,—He makes as if He would go farther. Jacob in an agony prays yet more earnestly. "He weeps and makes supplication." Still no response. The angel stands silent and motionless, as in a muse; at last He seems to come

to some resolve, and hastily turns as if to depart. Jacob in extremity, lays hold upon Him while the other resolutely tears Himself away. And so they wrestle together until the dawning of the day. At last the Angel, as if to terminate the strife, exclaims, "Let me go, for the day breaketh,"—and Jacob replies in those words which have lived in the hearts of all true wrestlers ever since, "I will not let thee go, except Thou bless me." And now the Lord's design is fulfilled. Jacob's faith is fully tried. Humility, patience, persevering earnestness, trust in God, hope against hope, stimulated to the highest point in the trial, have had their perfect work. Jacob has gained the blessing now, not by languid wishes or drowsy prayers, but by a real victory of faith fairly and nobly won in the battlefield. "And He said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. . . . And He blessed him there."

How fully that blessing was fulfilled, as regarded the immediate subject of present anxiety, we need not stay to tell. The melting scene on the morrow speaks too well for itself. The brothers met, not to grapple in enmity, but to embrace in love. Warm tears of relenting tenderness sealed their reconciliation, and drowned in forgetfulness all that was past. Blessed tears! blessed for Jacob as a token of his brother's forgiveness and of God's mercy: more blessed still for Esau, because he then learned how unutterably sweeter it is to forgive than to revenge. How true it is, that even human love,

when that deep is broken up within the heart, "covers a multitude of sins."

Learn, then, from the whole subject,

1. How near we are at all times to the world unseen. Though never, as to Jacob, revealed to our fleshly eyes, the unseen hosts of God are ever around the saints. The whole world, and any part of the world, will be a "Mahanaim" to those whose eyes are truly opened. Heaven, if we are the children of God, lies all about us every moment. "He giveth His angels charge over thee, to keep thee,"—and again it is written, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." Nor is it otherwise with the ungodly. They, too, tread every moment on the very verge of the spirit-world. Spirits of darkness haunt their path, ready when their feet slip to seize them for their prey, and carry them away to the dark abyss!

2. Never are we so near that world as in the hours of darkness. It was so with Jacob here. It was when there was night both within and around him, that the heaven was opened to him, and the angels of God met him. So is it ever in the dark night of sorrow, or spirit-trouble, that the soul has its keenest intuitions of eternal things, casts its deepest glances within the veil. It is in the night alone, that we see the stars. But for it, Orion and the Pleiads, and all the rest of the glorious host on high, had been for ever unknown, buried in a secrecy and solitude which neither eye nor telescope could ever explore. Nay, but for night we never could have known of their existence, could scarcely have dreamt

of any other world in the infinitude of space around us besides our own,—so that one night reveals more to us of the real greatness and grandeur of God's universe, than all the days together of all the years since the world began. Even so it is, in the spiritual world too, when the dark pall of sorrow is cast over all the bright objects of earth, that the glories of heaven come forth to view, and the waking spirit beholds what eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into the heart before to conceive. Oh ! how many are there besides the Psalmist who can say, “ It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes,” who have found in their hour of need that the blessed Bible is just another more glorious firmament that only requires the world's sun to set, that it may unveil its hidden glories, and reveal to our eyes its eternal stars.

3. Let us diligently improve the eve of time, in preparation for the great morning of eternity. Before us lies a far more eventful morrow, and more solemn meeting, than that which awaited Jacob. What was the vengeance of his injured brother, even had it proved as terrible as he feared, to that of the holy Judge of quick and dead, that, if impenitent and unreconciled, awaits us all ? Oh ! then let us be diligent that we may be found of Him in peace,—let us wrestle in believing prayer for that blessing, which will enable us to meet Him with joy and not with grief, and to find in Him, instead of an implacable enemy, a gracious and everlasting friend.

4. Let us continue in prayer and take no denial until

the blessing come. Let us not be discouraged by delay. Let not even an apparent denial make us cease our pleading. Remember Daniel, remember the Syrophenician woman, remember the importunate widow, remember the disciples at Emmaus,—and thus learn that it is ever God's way to stir up the grace of prayer before He answers it, to fan the holy flame to its utmost ardour, to draw forth from the deep heart the most piercing cries of impassioned supplication, and then to crown it with victory and blessing. Therefore persevere and faint not. Not only ask the blessing, but plead for it and wait, clinging to the footstool until it comes. You will prevail at last. Jacob's earnestness shall be crowned once more with Jacob's blessing, and you too shall have a Peniel, yea, many a Peniel in your way, and be enabled to say, even on this side heaven,—“I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”

VIII.

ESAU'S FORFEITURE.

“Looking diligently . . . lest there be any profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected : for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”—HEBREWS xii. 15, 16, 17.

THERE are few incidents of Bible history more touching than that of Esau's final loss of the blessing. An inexpressible pathos lingers over every line. It is one of those thrilling tales of true human interest, which appeals irresistibly to the sympathies of all hearts, and the bare recital of which in a moment makes all men kin. It is scarcely possible to read it without emotion, or without feeling a deep and almost personal interest in the actors. The figures on the canvass stand out before us clearly and vividly, and the whole scene rises up before the mind's eye in all the fresh reality of life, as though but of yesterday:—the aged patriarch bending with look of mingled fondness and grief over the manly form of his favourite child, bowed beneath the first great sorrow of his young life,—and then behind, dimly seen in the background, the shadowy forms of the scheming mother and her too congenial son, as if skulking in

the darkness, and watching from a distance the success of their vile and nefarious plot. We can almost see the blank and woeful look of Esau, hear his loud and exceeding bitter cry, and catch the very accents of that passionate outburst of sorrow,—“Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father.” That piercing wail from the depths of one human heart, touches an answering chord in every other to the end of time, and all the world over.

We cannot help feeling strongly for Esau. We instinctively take his part, as against the heartless and selfish authors of his misery. Whatever may have been his faults elsewhere, we feel that here at least he was right and they were wrong,—that in this transaction he was infinitely more sinned against than sinning. He was the victim, not the actor, in a scene which must ever brand this page as one of the blackest and most humiliating in human history. If he is thoughtless and reckless of his own highest interests, the greater the shame of those who took advantage of his wayward heedlessness to betray and ruin him. If in his carnal blindness he held the heavenly birthright and blessing light, the more hateful the selfish cunning that conspired to rob him of those jewels. And so we are ready with all our hearts to mingle our tears with those of the injured and defrauded brother—to cry shame on his vile betrayers—and almost sympathise with those deep muttered words of vengeance, with which, dashing away the indignant tears, he hurried despairing and almost broken-hearted from the presence of his father.

Such is this tale as a mere incident of ancient story, and such the feelings with which it must ever be regarded. But it is not a subject for mere sentimental sympathy and tears. These things were written not for our entertainment only, but for our learning. Within the bosom of a simple incident of old times, God has wrapt up a lesson of instruction and warning for men of every time. Esau's heedless trifling with precious privileges and opportunities, and their consequent irretrievable forfeiture, is but an example of what is happening in a thousand other instances every day. Thus the case of one speaks in tones of solemn admonition to all. Let us read and seriously ponder the lesson, brethren, that we may avoid the rock on which the unhappy trifler struck, and so by patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we may have hope. Let us, as suggested by the words of our text, proceed to consider in succession, Esau's general character—Esau's special want—Esau's folly—Esau's repentance—and Esau's despair.

I. *Esau's disposition.* As to this point it is obvious, from the whole history, that Esau was not what in ordinary phrase would be called a bad or wicked man. He was neither profligate, nor cruel, nor avaricious, nor unjust, nor at least openly and glaringly ungodly. He was not notorious for any great crimes, or flagrantly deficient in any of the ordinary duties of social life. To one parent at least, the only one who treated him with any fairness, he was an affectionate and dutiful child; and if an unhappy breach of bitter alienation

separated him from his only brother, it was one not of his, but of that brother's making. His faults were those rather of reckless heedlessness, than of cool and deliberate depravity. He was bold, impetuous, impulsive, eagerly bent on the indulgence of the present moment, and thoughtless of after consequences ; but like many others of similar temperament, frank, open, and generous-hearted withal. Beneath a rough and rude exterior, he concealed a warm and kindly heart, and occasionally, as at the meeting of the brothers after their long estrangement, surprises us with bursts of generous tenderness peculiarly honourable to him. Esau was a strong, but not hard character,—vehement and passionate, but not malignant. He was his old father's darling child,—partly indeed for the reason specially mentioned, “because he did eat of his son's venison,” but doubtless also on other and higher accounts. There was something in the brave, manly, fearless spirit of his young hunter, which, from the well-known principle of contrasts, must have been peculiarly captivating to the mild and gentle Isaac ; and if he dearly loved his gallant boy, he had doubtless been often made to feel that he had a heart to return his preference with willing and devoted service. Such then was Esau, as regards his natural disposition and character, and as a mere man of the world. But we must now look a little deeper, and consider in the second place,

II. *His special fault.* As a man of the world we have seen he possessed a character in the main respect-

able and unexceptionable. But his great fault was, that he was a man of the world and nothing more. At this time at least, and however it may have been with him in his later years, he was evidently "without God and without hope" in the world. In the emphatic words of our text he was "*a profane person*,"—a man, that is, not necessarily of an openly impious or vicious character, but simply secular and earthly in his spirit and aims; the word "profane," as well as the original Greek term of which it is here a translation, signifying properly that which is common or unconsecrated in opposition to that which is sacred or dedicated to holy uses. (Literally, it means that which you may lawfully tread upon, as opposed to the sacred precincts of the sanctuary, which none but hallowed feet may touch.) The profane is thus the outer world of mere nature and common life, as distinct from the inner shrine of the heavenly and the divine. So too, we speak of sacred history and profane history, meaning by that latter term, not the history of the wicked or ungodly, but simply of the common men and common affairs of the world. In this sense then the word is obviously used here; indeed, in no other sense could it apply to the character of Esau as he is portrayed in the sacred history. He was a man, in short, of this world, a common ordinary man, from the general herd, having his portion in this life, and with no higher hopes beyond. He dwelt wholly within the sphere of present things; this world to him was the only real world; his entire circle of thoughts, cares, interests, hopes, fears, was there; to that other infinite realm of

spiritual and eternal things which lies above it and around it, he was an utter stranger. To him the world was everything, and God and heaven nothing, or next to nothing. He lived in the region of the secular in contradistinction to the sacred and divine, and deemed, with the foolish in every age, that "there is nothing better for a man than to eat and to drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour all the days of his life, which God giveth him."

Such was Esau,—such was the very worst that is recorded of him in the book of infallible truth. Alas! how many such are there in every age! How many among ourselves! How many even in this Christian land, and within the pale of Christian profession and communion, are in the same sense with him "profane persons,"—having their portion in this life, their hearts in the world, and their whole habitual thoughts, feelings, cares, engrossed with passing sublunary things! Their profession perhaps is in heaven,—but their conversation, their real fatherland and heart's home, is on the earth. They live for time, not for eternity,—for themselves, not for God. In outward behaviour they may be respectable, and even in some points exemplary; in the ordinary relations of life, as wives, husbands, parents, children, they may be kind, and, in the world's sense, dutiful; but to the higher relations that bind them to God and heaven, they are almost wholly strangers. They are without faith, without repentance, without grace. They are secular, earthly, carnal. In one emphatic, pregnant word, they are "pro-

fane persons." The smile of the heavenly Father, and the blessings of the eternal birthright, are to them nothing in comparison with the mere animal care of "what shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?"—and a morsel of earthly pottage is of more account to them than a whole heaven of spiritual and future joys. And so, like Esau, in the hour of trial, when the cravings of their ruling passion are strong upon them, and when nothing now stands between them and their darling pleasure but this birthright which they hold so light, and in the very existence of which they scarce believe, the die is soon cast. Every consideration of conscience, duty, the fear of God, the hope of heaven, is bartered away for the indulgence of the moment, and the fatal bargain of Esau is repeated again. But this brings us to our third topic of discourse,

III. *Esau's folly.* The precise nature and full privileges of what is here called the "birthright," it is not easy, nor is it necessary, to define. It is enough to say, that it was the position alike of dignity and of blessing belonging to the first-born in the sacred line of God's covenanted mercy. It constituted him the representative for the time of the holy chosen race, and as such, the depository and guardian of those celestial treasures which had been entrusted to that race for the future blessing of the world, in the chain of God's eternal purposes of love,—one of the august band of hoary and truly royal fathers, not of Israel only, but of all mankind, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ

came who is over all, God blessed for ever. It was thus not a high honour or privilege only, but a sacred trust, like the custody of the Ark itself, not to be trifled with or bartered for gold, or parted with but with life itself. But not so thought Esau. In his carnal blindness he regarded this sublime distinction as a trifle light as air, nay, scarcely believed in its very existence. As a thing in its nature mainly spiritual, and belonging rather to the future than the present, it seemed to him little better than a visionary chimera and dream, not worthy for a moment to be compared with the present and substantial objects of sense. "I am at the point to die," he cried, when, stung with the pangs of hunger, the dainty morsel, like the forbidden fruit of old, caught his eye, "and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" And so, at the first breath of temptation, he snatched the golden crown from his head, and cast it like a worthless bauble in the mire.

Even so have thousands done since his day; so, perhaps, have some of you, or are even now doing. Esau's story is but a specimen of the manner in which men in every age lose the tide of life—forfeit the golden moment of opportunity, which, once gone, is gone for ever. Every man has his birthright and blessing like Esau—his own providential advantages and God-given opportunities of good, of getting good, and of doing good—of saving his own soul and that of others—of winning heaven and leading others there. That is his birthright; a birthright more precious than worlds—a birthright carrying an infinite blessing within its bosom—a birthright which,

if true to himself, he may seize and make his own for ever,—but which, in the great majority of cases, is trifled with, bartered away, and irretrievably lost.

“*For one morsel of meat* he sold his birthright.” Surely, at least, we are not such fools as that. If, like him, we barter away our higher interests for earthly things, it is at least for a better bribe than he. Are you sure of this? Has there never been a critical moment in your life, when the whole battle, of God or the world, Christ or the Devil, seemed to hang on the balance, and when the trembling scale was turned by a trifle light as that which decided Esau? You thrust away the golden moment of striving and almost victorious grace, for a mere momentary pleasure of the flesh, keen indeed, and fatally sweet, but hollow and evanescent as his. And since then, perhaps, you have never had such another moment of grace; since then you have gone backward, not forward,—losing ever, not gaining in the great battle. And if not thus by a single throw, are there not many who barter away their birthright piecemeal—that fritter away and dissipate that heavenly inheritance day by day—Sabbaths, sacraments, days of grace, moments of conviction and impression, one after another, till all are gone, and gone for ever? Alas! what need have we to take heed lest there be among us any profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright!

IV. *Esau's repentance.* Esau's birthright is gone, and yet he feels apparently as if it still were his. He goes on just as before, giving himself little trouble about the

matter, and seems scarcely if at all aware that any important change has taken place in his position and prospects. Had the sale of the birthright been a mere act of innocent sport, it could scarcely have affected him less or bulked less largely in his mind than it seems to have done. This is indeed quite what we might have expected. Regarding as he had done the birthright as a mere trifle while it was still his own, he did not feel that he had lost much now that it is gone; like a savage who would willingly barter a priceless diamond for a gilded bauble, and count himself happy in the exchange. What reckes the sensual swinish heart of the holy pearls, which, in its eager rush to the trough, it tramples down in its way?

A circumstance, however, soon occurred to rouse Esau from his dream, as it has done thousands after him. This was the loss of the blessing. The birthright which he held so light, he finds to his dismay carried the blessing in its bosom, and that by the bartering of the one he had forfeited the other. He had never thought of this. He had never meant, or dreamed of, this when he made his fatal bargain. Indeed, in the wild delirium of the moment, he had thought of nothing but his hunger and the dainty morsel before him. But now he awakes because of that which he has lost. Esau loves his father. He would not for the world forfeit that father's love, or lose his share of that heritage of blessing which he should leave behind. The very thought of disinheriting himself of a treasure so dear and sacred,—of that father passing away from earth,

and leaving him, his darling child, unblessed, or with any lesser meed of blessing than might have been his, was intolerable to him,—and yet this was the very calamity which in his folly he had brought upon himself, and which now in all its bitterness stares him in the face. Thus quickly did sorrow follow on the heels of sin,—thus apace did that accursed seed, so heedlessly sown, spring up into bitter and deadly fruit. Alas! and is it not even so, that sinners still learn that it is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the Lord? Then first do they see the evil of sin, when, in the retributive providence of God, they are made to eat of the fruit of their own ways, and are filled with their own devices. They think nothing of the little seeds of sin which drop into the ground till the harvest of death appears. According to the old fable, they gaily sow the dragon's teeth, and shudder to see them springing up armed men. Like Cain of old, their punishment, not their sin, is greater than they can bear. The cup of sin was sweet, but its dregs are bitter; and shame and sorrow extort the exceeding bitter cry of selfish anguish from hearts that never wept for sin, or breathed one sigh of ingenuous grief for a Father dishonoured and a Saviour despised.

V. *Esau's unavailing sorrow.* There are some consequences of sin which even the truest repentance and most thorough amendment of heart and life can never repair. The guilt of sin may be pardoned, and yet its fruit remain. There are some things which when done,

cannot be undone, even by the forgiving and saving grace of God : fountains of tears which once opened will still flow on all the days even of the true penitent's life on earth. Instances of this are innumerable, and must occur to every one. The murderer may mourn in bitter sorrow over his victim, but that remorse can never restore the murdered man to life, or gather up one fatal drop of blood spilt on the ground. The penitent Magdalene may recover her peace with God, but can never repair her virgin honour, or be on earth at least what she has been. We may lament the wasted years of a thoughtless youth, but we can never recover the precious seed-time of life, or do now the work that should have been done then. We may grieve over the golden opportunities which met us on the threshold of our manhood, and which, if timely seized, might have led us on to usefulness and honour,—but when once the tide has passed, it will never return again. The converted and forgiven sinner remembers with anguish the companions of his sin, the companions whom he has helped to ruin, and would give all the world for one opportunity of speaking to them, and pleading with them, and doing something to repair the evil himself had done. But it cannot be. The man who has wasted health and strength in the service of the devil, and now remains in mind and body but the miserable wreck of that which once he was, may, through the divine mercy repent and be forgiven, but he can never regain the buoyant life and vigour of his early prime, or have anything but the dregs of his earthly existence at least to give to God.

Such are but a few instances out of thousands illustrative of this principle. So was it with Esau. Thus he lost his birthright and his blessing; lost them finally, lost them for ever,—“so that afterwards when he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” However it may have been with him in regard to his eternal destiny (for of this the present passage speaks nothing), whatever at least was desirable and precious in the birthright and blessing here on earth was gone,—for ever gone. And so it is that if men take not heed, their heavenly, their everlasting blessing shall be forfeited too. What are youth, health, days of grace, baptismal gifts, parental counsels, gospel calls, convictions of conscience, strivings of the Spirit, yearnings of the weary homeless heart, but, so to speak, part of the birthright, of the divinely-ordained means of blessing, with which a man sets out in life, and which must all be realised and made our own, or like Esau’s, trifled and squandered away? So with the whole of life, the entire space of time—with all its providential calls, opportunities, means, and materials of well-doing and of well-being, which God once for all has assigned to each of us. This is our birthright, which, once gone, is gone beyond recall.

How is it, my brethren, with you? Have you claimed your birthright, and do you now enjoy the blessing,—the blessing of pardon, the blessing of peace, the blessing of a Father’s love, the blessing of a holy, peaceful conscience, the blessing of a new heart, a new life,

and a hope full of glory beyond the skies,—or are you still unblessed? Is your birthright slipping through your hands? Shall you leave the world with an exceeding bitter cry, and fill eternity with the weeping and wailing of unavailing sorrow? Oh, be wise in time, and while you mourn over that which is lost, seize with all your might that fragment of the birthright that yet remains, crying in a better spirit than Esau, “Bless me, even me also, O my Father!”

IX.

UNANSWERED PRAYER.

“Be not silent to me.”—PSALM xxviii. 2.

I. THE first thing which strikes us as lying on the very surface of this pregnant text is, that *the true suppliant at the throne of grace expects an answer*. He not only prays, but he looks for a response to his prayers. He not only speaks to God, but he expects that God will speak to him. “Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray,” says this same royal suppliant elsewhere, and, “I will look up,”—expecting an answer. Prayer, in his view, was a real converse and traffic with the skies, a converse and traffic not on one side only, but on both. It was not a mere soliloquy with his own soul, but a colloquy between his soul and God. It is a ladder set on the earth whose top reacheth unto heaven, and the angels of God not only ascend but descend upon it,—angel prayers climbing upwards, angel blessings speeding down its shining stairs. Therefore the Psalmist came with boldness to the throne of grace, not only that he might seek mercy, but that he might “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” To such intercourse, to such blessed transacting with God, silence on

either side were equally fatal. If the soul is silent to God, there is no prayer at all; if the Lord is silent to the soul, there is no accepted, there is no effectual prayer.

It is true, indeed, that to the genuine suppliant who at the throne of grace casts his burden on the Lord, there is a certain blessed sense of relief in the very act of prayer itself. To look again to God's holy temple, in the hour of darkness and distress—to pour out the tale of our sins and sorrows into the ears of infinite mercy—to lean back our feeble spirits on the strong Rock of ages and feel that He is behind us—even in this, apart altogether from any more sensible tokens of a gracious acceptance, there is support and strength. It is a blessed thing thus to cast our burden upon the Lord, and to commit our case to Him and feel that we have done so, even before we assuredly know that He has taken up that burden, that He has made that case His own. Simple, naked faith, thus precedes sense, and prepares the way for it,—the faint, dim dawn before the warm flush of morn. When Hezekiah had spread the letter of Sennacherib before the Lord and left it there, he doubtless in that very act experienced a great relief, as if the burden that lay so heavy on his heart were almost already gone. There is comfort in the hour of sudden alarm in the very fact of having sent for a physician—that a messenger is on his way to him—and bright hope keeps watch by the sufferer's bed until he comes. Thus even already does the pleading soul feel that it is a good thing to draw near to the Lord, that there is

peace, that there is strength, that there is holy and deep repose, in the very act of prayer. But then we are to remember that the comfort that comes before the answer is mainly grounded on the hope that the answer will come. God may be silent now, but He will not always keep silence. My petition now lies before the throne, but my trust is that it will not lie for ever there unnoticed and unregarded. The Divine Physician is not yet come, and meanwhile my sore disease pursues its course, and my life draweth nigh to the grave,—but He has been sent for, and surely He is coming and will soon be here. It is this hope that gives sweetness and strength to prayer. The upward glancing of the eye gives comfort and help, but it is because God, though none but God, is nigh. “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defence; I shall not be moved.” Thus the true suppliant not only prays but waits, not only speaks but listens. “I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and my hope is in His word. I wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning.”

My dear brethren, is this your idea of prayer, and is this what it practically is to you? Has it been your way thus not to bring your petitions to the footstool only, but to cling to the footstool until you have obtained the answer? Is prayer really to you a means of obtaining blessings from the Lord, blessings that spring not up in your own hearts within, but come down distinctly from above?

Have you called unto the Lord in distress, and has the Lord answered you, and set you in a large place? Can you say with the Psalmist, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined His ear unto me, and heard my cry?" I believe every true suppliant at the throne has had something of this experience. There have been times when to his clear consciousness the very gate of heaven has been opened to him, and blessings supernatural and divine have come down like angel ministries of mercy in answer to his cry, so that he could be as sure of the fact as he is of his very life. Do you know anything of this experience? If not, surely you have yet to learn the worth and power of prayer. God has been silent to you, and you have been silent to God.

II. I proceed, however, a step further, and remark from the text, that though the true suppliant expects an answer, *the answer does not always immediately come*. It manifestly did not do so in the present case. The very cry of this earnest suppliant that the Lord would not continue to keep silence to him plainly implies that He was keeping silence now, that up to that moment, from the beginning of his present supplications, that silence was yet unbroken. He heard as if He heard not. He heard, but answered not a word.

Nor is this unusual in the dealings of God towards His suppliant people. It is, indeed, apparently the ordinary course of the divine economy of grace thus to interpose an interval of delay between the prayer and the answer, an interval of hope, of desire, of earnest seeking, of holy

importunate wrestling, before faith is crowned with victory, and tears are changed into songs. Weeping may endure for a night, and oftentimes a long and weary night, though joy does come in the morning. Now and then, indeed, it is otherwise ; now and then, even while we are yet speaking, the Lord hears, and the answer follows the prayer, as sudden and as quick as the sound follows the flash in a thunder-clap ; as when, for example, the poor leper moaned out in his anguish, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,” and the instantaneous echo returned, “I will, be thou clean ;”—or, as when the dying thief whispered in the darkness, “Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,” and immediately the reply was given from the neighbouring cross, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” There was no time for delay then, and there was no delay. But ordinarily it is not so. Such instances are the exception, not the rule. Much more often does it happen that even the truest suppliant asks again and again before he receives, seeks long before he finds, knocks with reiterated urgency before it is opened unto him. Thus He tries and trains our faith,—thus He proves and stimulates our earnestness,—thus He effectually teaches us our helplessness, and our absolute dependence on His simple mercy and grace,—thus He weans us from all creature stays and confidences, that we may lean alone on Him,—thus He compels us to seek out the secret causes of distance and of darkness, and to put away the evil thing,—and thus He enhances to us, enhances a thousand-fold the preciousness of the boon when at last it

comes. The longer and the darker the night, the brighter smiles the morn. The sterner and the wearier the winter, the more welcome and the more gladsome the spring. The more utter our despair of self, the more absolute our trust, and the more glorious our victory in the Lord.

It is thus that in every age the Lord has dealt with His most illustrious and most successful suppliants. So was it with Jacob. He wrestled all night long, until the breaking of the day, before the blessing and the new name were won. So was it with the Syro-phenician. Again and again did she pour out her complaint in the ears of One who apparently heard her not, and seemed in the very act of being spurned like a dog from His feet, when the answer in peace was given. So was it with the storm-tossed disciples on the Galilean sea. All through the night had they buffeted with the winds and the waves while the Saviour was far away on the unseen shore, and not till the fourth watch had brought a dim, uncertain light on the waters, making the crested billows loom more terribly than ever through the gloom, did He come to hush the storm to rest. So was it with the gentle and devoted sisters of Bethany. Oh, how anxiously did they count the slow passing moments, moments that seemed almost like weary hours, between the dispatch of their messenger, and the earliest moment their Lord could arrive! But now that moment is come, and is passed, long passed, and yet He comes not. There is not even any message, not a single word to tell them that He is coming,—that He is not forgetting them. He is silent unto them,

silent in the very hour of their greatest need, of their deep and most utter desolation. Meanwhile, the dread disease pursues its ravages, and death with hot haste presses on, while the Prince of life is tarrying. But He comes at last, and comes at the right time, at the best time, though a time strange to flesh and blood. He comes in man's view too late, but not too late in God's,—too late to prevent the evil the sisters feared, but not too late to repair it,—too late to anticipate death, but not too late to triumph over it,—too late to grant the blessing the sisters craved, but not too late to do exceeding abundantly above all that they were able to ask or to think. Thus to those who feared His name did the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings, and the darkness of night was turned into the light of the morning.

Now surely, brethren, these things that were written aforetime were written for our learning, for the encouragement and consolation of the true seekers of the Lord in every age and land, that they, too, by patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope. Let us not be cast down and discouraged by the Lord's delay. Though He tarry, wait for Him. Let us learn from those examples that God's silence is not a refusal, but only a provocation to greater earnestness and importunity. He refuses, in order that He may more loyally give,—He thrusts us away, that He may draw us closer to Himself,—He keeps silence for a while, that He may more graciously speak at last. Even He whom the Father heareth always, and in whom He is ever well-pleased, the Prince

of suppliants and wrestlers, seemed for a while, in the hour of His great extremity, to plead in vain. "O my God, I cry in the day-time, and Thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent. Be not far from me, O God, O my strength; haste Thee to help me." But the more His faith is tried, the firmer does it cling. The deeper His Father's silence, the louder and more earnest His cry, till, having poured out His soul, long and fervently, "in strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death, He was heard in that He feared."

In this then, brethren, let us follow the steps of our great Exemplar. As we learn from Him to suffer and to serve, so let us also learn from Him to pray. "It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord,"—"till the Lord look down and behold from heaven,"—for, "though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies." Let us thus wait, brethren. Let us wait patiently. Let us wait longingly. Let us wait expectantly, and we shall not wait in vain. They that wait on the Lord shall never be put to shame. What says he, whose plaintive and almost despairing words we are now considering? What is the experience which in other and happier days he records for the encouragement of all after suppliants, who should tread the same dark path of trouble, doubt, and fear? "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

I go on, however, to remark,

III. *That the true suppliant, though he seeks patiently to await the answer, cannot rest satisfied without it.* The Lord's silence and delay, though he tries meekly to endure it, and though he knows that God is both righteous and wise in thus afflicting him, is in itself very painful to him. Sweet as are the uses of that trying dispensation afterwards, and loudly as he shall yet praise the Lord that He did thus try him, it is not for the present joyous, but grievous. If from this sowing-time of tears, there shall be a reaping-time of joy, they are none the less tears, and bitter tears, still. If we can bear easily the hiding of the Father's face, and the long silence of His lips, it is a sad sign surely that we have the hearts, not of children, but of strangers. A hireling servant may be well content with his master's wages and his master's fare, though he should never hear his voice or see his face,—but nothing less than that can satisfy a child. More terrible even than a father's frown, or a father's rod, or a father's word of keen reproof, is a father's silence. That he will not speak to him, that he will not speak one word of kindness and of forgiveness, it is this that cuts him to the very heart. And the longer that this silence continues, it becomes the more painful, till at last it grows into a burden almost too heavy to be borne, and his poor heart breaks and cries out in its desolate anguish, “O father, speak to me, speak to me, be not silent to me, to me thy child,—speak to me, if it were but a single word, to tell me

that I am forgiven, and that I am thy own child once more." And so the father relents at last, and as he presses the little penitent to his bosom and dries his tears, he whispers in such words as these: "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him."

And as in the earthly relation, so also in the heavenly, —as in the natural, so in the divine. The spirit of adoption which divine grace imparts is but the translation into a higher sphere of the feelings which stir within the breast of every true child, and the infinite, eternal Fatherhood is only the reality of which every other father's love is but a shadow. So, the mere fact of God's silence is painful to him to whom the spirit of adoption has been given, just because from its very nature it excludes him from the blessed sense of His gracious presence and love. In this way it is tantamount to what is elsewhere called, "the hiding of His face,"—the gracious look, and the gracious word, the smile and the voice of love, being the two main and most expressive signs by which the heart speaks; and accordingly it is that in another Psalm we find the first of these acts spoken of, as the second is here, (Ps. cxliii. 7) "Hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit." Each expression alike indicates the cutting off of sensible intercourse, the withdrawal of sensible manifestation and communication, and the consequent drying up of all the deep springs of light, and life, and peace within the soul.

And from this flow other evils scarcely less bitter and painful. How can the soul to whom the Lord thus keeps silence know that his prayer is heard at all? It is the reply alone that assures us that our letters to a beloved friend far away have reached his hand, or that he still lives to receive them. When he keeps silence, and long months or years pass away without a response, we fear either that he is dead, or that our words of kindness and affection have missed their way. So it is with the answer to prayer. The answer is conveyed either in actual blessings, or in secret whispers and consolations of grace that attest the hearing of prayer; and when that answer is long delayed, we may well cry out with Jeremiah, "Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." Nay, sometimes it seems to us in this awful silence as if there was no God at all, no higher world, no heaven, no stars. At least He is at a great distance separated from us by an awful gulf, across which we look, but see no light,—cry, but receive no answer. When the strayed child cries out in the darkness to Him in whose guidance and help he trusts, and whom he thought to be near at hand, and when no answer returns,—nothing but the echoes of his own voice in the awful silence,—his heart sinks within him as he feels himself all alone. So a silent God is an absent God; at least it seems to the soul as if it were so. How can it but do so, as he cries out in his trouble for light, guidance, succour, strength, to Him who alone can help, and there comes no answer? Meantime, while God is afar off, trouble is near. While

the master tarries on the further shore, the winds and waves roar for their prey, and the frail bark struggles as in the jaws of death. When He hideth His face we are troubled. Darkness broods over the soul. Guilt presses on the conscience. Terrors affright and scare the heart. He sinks in the deep waters,—the floods come in upon his soul,—he is going down, and as he stretches out his hand for help in vain, and flings out his voice into the dark, blind, pitiless night, and no answer comes, he is like unto them that go down into the pit, even those who in the day of their extremity shall call and He shall refuse, who shall stretch out their hand and He shall not regard, but shall “laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh.” It was the fear of being thus forsaken in the day of his extremity—the painful feeling he now had, as if he were about to be so forsaken—that drew from the Psalmist the strong, and almost despairing cry of the text, “Be not silent to me, O God.”

Is there any one here present to whom God has been always silent, to whom He has not only now and then kept silence as to the Psalmist here, but to whom He has kept silence all their life long? Have you never heard the gracious voice of God speaking peace to your heart, and saying to your soul, “I am thy salvation?” Have you been all your days a stranger to Him,—never conversed with Him in love, never walked with Him in holy fellowship, and tasted the sweetness of His mercy? Alas! poor soul! you are like unto those that go down

into the pit. What if He should keep silence to you for ever, if you should never see His face in love, never hear His voice save only in accents of wrath and doom? What if on a dying day, on a judgment day, He should be silent to you, if then you should cry out and shout, and He should shut out your prayer! Oh, be warned in time! "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." He has not always been silent to you, though you have been silent to Him. He has called, though you have refused to hear, —He has stretched out His hand, though you have not regarded. Let Him not speak in vain. Let not your silence constrain even infinite love itself to be for ever silent to you.

To you, on the other hand, who have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, and have often conversed with Him in holy spiritual fellowship, though now His voice is silent, I would speak in another language. Humble yourselves deeply in the dust, but be not overmuch cast down by the present hiding of your Father's face, and withdrawal of His sensible and gracious consolation. His silence is not necessarily an eternal silence. The hiding of His face is not the withdrawal of His love. Nay, rather, oftentimes does He in a little wrath hide His face from His people for a moment, just that, thus weaning them from their idols, and drawing them closer to Himself than ever, with everlasting kindness He may have mercy on them. Why should it not be even so with you? Nay, is not the fact that you so painfully feel His silence, and so long to have that

silence broken, and the blessed fellowship of your first espousals renewed, a sign that He has not utterly forsaken you, and cast you off for ever? Be not then discouraged. Look again to God's holy temple, and cry to Him from the depths. Pray on. Wait on. Hope on. It may be but a little while, and the dark cloud shall break, and the Sun of Righteousness shine out again, and the same lips that now pour forth this mournful complaint, take up the joyful strains with which this very psalm is closed: "Blessed be the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of my supplication. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him."

X.

FUTURE UNFOLDING OF PRESENT MYSTERIES.

“What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.”—
JOHN xiii. 7.

IN these words we have only a single instance of a principle which is of wide and varied application. Divested of the special accidents of place and circumstance with which they are here connected, and viewed with regard to their naked essence, they teach us the great truth, that the ways of God towards the sons of men are progressive,—that they evolve their purpose and their meaning gradually and slowly, and that therefore if we would judge of them rightly, we must wait to see the end. We see the thing He is doing, or at least a part of it, but we do not know what it is. We see the movement as it were of His hands, hear the sound of His feet, but what He is doing, or whither He is going, as yet we know not. “His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters,” and we must follow Him,—follow Him blindly, if we would reach the shore, and see the wealthy place whither He is leading us. He leadeth the blind in a way they know not—leadeth them step by step, along a road of which a few inches alone

are visible, and which stretches away into the infinite unseen. The lamp to the feet illumines only the spot on which now we tread, and that on which we are to tread next,—while all beyond and before is darkness. God Himself indeed has a complete plan of your life continually before Him,—but He lets you only see the point at which He is working, and in which He would have you to work with Him. “Master! where dwellest Thou?” was the disciples’ question at their very first meeting with the Lord. “Come and see,” was the simple and pregnant reply. To all curious and unprofitable questionings alike concerning our own future, and concerning that of our brethren, He has for us meanwhile, but one decisive and all-sufficing, “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.”

This is the principle of our text. Let us endeavour more fully to open up its meaning, and apply its lesson.

I. We must wait to know *the meaning* of things of which we now only see the form. So, in the case immediately before us. “What I do thou knowest not now.” Thou seest me doing it, but thou dost not know what I mean by it,—this thou shalt know hereafter. So is it also in innumerable other cases. The world is full of hidden meanings that lie behind the form of visible things, which require both thought and patience, and often long time also, to decipher. The universe is but one vast volume covered over with the hieroglyphic signs of hidden truth, one great Interpreter’s house, with

lessons of instruction for every pilgrim, had we only the Interpreter himself beside us to read and apply them. The sun, the stars, the trees, the great mountains, the mighty sea, the countless sands, the rivers of God that are full of water, the lilies, the birds, the thick sown field, the dying germ, the springing blade, summer and winter, day and night, sickness and health, Sabbath peace, home joys, a faithful friend, a father's fear, a mother's love,—all have their special message of heavenly wisdom and grace; eternal truths hid beneath the forms of passing things; divine words written between the lines for those who have eyes to read them.

Of this deeper interpretation of common things, Scripture gives us many examples both in the Old Testament, and in the New. “The righteous shall flourish as the palm tree, he shall grow as the cedar in Lebanon.”—“The ungodly are not so, but they are as the chaff which the wind driveth away.”—“The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.”—“I am the true vine.”—“Consider the lilies.”—“Consider the fowls of the air.”—“Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.”—And the thoughtful, heaven-taught soul acquires a happy and ever-increasing skill in tracing out those hidden meanings for himself. Still there are depths of wisdom in the great volume, grand revelations of mysterious and far-reaching truths, which we shall never fully explore on earth,—and which must be reserved for that great day, when we shall see not merely as now a little way beneath the surface, but down to the very centre and heart of things. “What

I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter."

II. We must wait to know *the reason* of things, of which we now only know the fact. Singular, indeed, is the folly of those who refuse to believe anything except what they can understand. To say so is just in reality to say that we shall believe nothing, for assuredly, in the strict and full sense of the word, we understand nothing. The thing which we suppose ourselves to know best of all, we often in reality understand least of all. We know the form of many living things, and have no doubt whatever of the reality of their life,—yet who shall define life itself or explain what it is? We know the functions of the body, and the operations of the mind,—but what is body, and what is mind, and by what mysterious links they are joined together,—what science can discover—what philosophy can explain? We give names to the objects around us to conceal our ignorance of their real nature, and because we are familiar with the words, flatter ourselves that we understand the things. We speak of light, electricity, the magnetic current, gravitation, chemical affinity, and so forth,—but what do we know about these things, except that we are conscious of something, or can trace the effects of something, to which we have given these names, and we dream that we have shed a flood of light upon them, when those names have been given?

Science, indeed, investigates not only the facts, but also the causes of things ; but these causes still are only

second causes,—one or two further links of a chain, whose beginning is unseen. “Who can by searching find out God?” Who can find out the primary root and ground of anything which God hath made?

Why then refuse to believe the mysterious truths of the spiritual world, merely because we cannot fully understand them? If even the commonest things of earth be shrouded in such mystery, how shall we expect to fathom the depths of the things that are in heaven? Is not the very law of our existence here that we shall know much, but understand almost nothing? No doubt the time is coming when we shall know more, when we shall not only be sure of the facts, but shall see something also of the reasons of things. It may be that we shall yet see a little way even into the mystery of Being, its Trinity in Unity, the divine decrees, the origin of evil, &c. Meanwhile, be it ours to believe, to work, to wait; to welcome and improve the light we have, while we humbly look for more; content to see only as in a glass darkly, in the hope that we shall yet see face to face,—cheered on, the while, by the assurance of the Master, “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.”

III. We must wait to know *the end* of things of which we now only know the beginning. It has passed into the most familiar of all proverbs that we can never judge of anything rightly until we have seen its end. None but a fool or a child, it is said, would think of judging of a great work when it is only begun or half finished.

Examples are innumerable and obvious. The first rude stones of a sublime and stately edifice—an isolated spring or wheel of an exquisite and complicated mechanism—the opening chapters of a great volume—the first rough sketch of a great picture—a single note or chord of a grand symphony,—what can we learn from these things of the real purpose and plan of the worker, or of the excellence of his work? Sometimes it is not even until it is nearly finished that the design is fully apparent, and order finally emerges out of confusion, beauty out of deformity, and bright intelligence out of meaningless chaos. Not seldom does the whole symmetry of a building depend on the completion of a single tower or pinnacle,—the perfection of a painting on a single touch. An arch is nothing but a precarious heap of stones, that cannot even sustain its own weight, until it receives the key-stone. How ill should we judge either of the gardener's or the physician's art, did we look only to the immediate results! How rude should we deem the pruning knife of the one, and how cruel the bitter medicines of the other! How heartless were the labours of the husbandman, did he look no farther than the sowing time,—and the boy at school frets over his irksome task, because he knows not of the golden harvest of which he is sowing the seed. And if it be so in regard to the works of men, shall it be otherwise with the works of God? If even the puny plans of those whose days are but as the twinkling of an eye require some time to develop their meaning, and manifest their wise designs, how much more the mighty thoughts of

Him to whom "a thousand years are but as one day?" Shall we judge Him only by His beginnings, without waiting to see His ends,—look only at means and think nothing of results,—fix our attention wholly on what He is doing, without inquiring what He designs? Nay, but much better and truer is the divine philosophy, the wisdom that speaketh to us from heaven, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye therefore patient and stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Shall we regret the toils of the sowing and the weeping rains that accompany it, or of the long, weary months that follow it, when such a glorious harvest home is come? "Behold we count them happy that endure," who patiently and steadfastly wait. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen *the end* of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

Leave then the great Master builder of thy life to complete His work, and to bring forth the crowning pinnacle, ere thou complainest of the rude heaps that cumber the foundation, or the long, weary shaping of the stones. There is much meanwhile, no doubt, that you cannot understand, but believe that He understands, and will yet, ere long, make His meaning plain. Soon shall the cloud of confusion disperse, and the divine eternal order appear. Meanwhile, let it be our comfort that He is working, and that it is His own gracious voice that whispers to us, amid our impatient fretfulness and

anxious fears, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

There are other applications which we might have made of the principle of the text,—as, for instance: We must wait to see *the whole* of what we now know only a part,—and we must wait to see *the perfection* of what we now know only the feeble tentative approximation;—but what we have given may suffice as examples, and we must now, in conclusion, point out some of the practical lessons which flow from the subject.

1. We learn a lesson of *patience*. "Wait upon the Lord, and be of good courage." Give Him time to accomplish His purposes, and, meanwhile, leave thy case wholly in His hands. Shrink not at the bitter draught and sharp wounds of the physician's lance that is to work out your eternal healing, for no patient yet ever miscarried in His hands. Only make sure that He is indeed on your side, and that He is working all His work in you, and all shall in the end be well. "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; and He shall bring it to pass: and He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day."—"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

2. Learn a lesson of *fear*. What if the Lord should not be on our side, should not be the architect of our life, the physician of our souls,—and if the end to which all

things are tending should be an end of darkness, and not of light?

Ah! there are other secrets in the eternal world which the great day shall declare, besides the crown of righteousness and the eternal blessedness of the redeemed. "The ungodly are not so, but they are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Oh, then, let us be diligent to make our calling and election sure, and not be high-minded, but fear, when we hear the words, not of the gracious Saviour only, but of the Righteous Judge,—“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” And let us take along with them that other pregnant saying, spoken but a moment before, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.”

XI.

WILDERNESS BLOSSOMS.

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them ; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”—ISAIAH xxxv. i.

It is not the utterance of querulous discontent, but the expression of the mere simple truth, when we say that the world we live in, and which as pilgrims we are passing through, is “a wilderness.” Like the chosen people of old in their journey through the Syrian desert, from the land of exile to the city of their fathers, we are indeed travelling home, but our path lies meanwhile through “a dry and thirsty land where no water is.” It is a place of privation, a place of hardships and of toil, a place of weariness and loneliness, of constant transition and change. Many of us have already felt it so very deeply, —and all of us, if we live long, will surely feel it sooner or later, more or less. When the heaven that lies about us in our infancy has closed its gates,—when the golden glory of the morning has died away and given place to the light of common day,—our early dreams of Eden vanish, and we find ourselves amid the stern realities of a world on which the primeval curse of barrenness rests, and in which toil and travail, sorrow and care, are the appointed lot of all. It was one of the most prosperous

of the sons of men who sighed, in the very bitterness of disappointed hope, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,"—and one of the best and happiest, who confessed in his old age, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," and whose truest comfort it was at last that he could say, not "I have found rest or contentment on earth," but "I have waited for Thy salvation, O God."

I. The wilderness is a place of *privation*. No verdant pastures smile there, no golden harvests wave there, no happy flocks brouse and make their fold there. There is food neither for man nor beast, save only here and there, at distant intervals, in favoured spots amid the surrounding barrenness,—little patches of greenness and beauty, just enough to apprise the traveller that he is not wholly beyond the realm of life, and to remind him of the fairer and better world that lies beyond those wastes of rock and sand.

So is it with the pilgrim soul here on earth. The soul was made for God, and can find its true rest only in Him; but our present state is one essentially of exile and distance from Him. Even those who have been brought nigh to Him by the blood of the cross, and live habitually nearest to Him, behold His glory as yet only in passing glimpses,—“see His back parts” only as He passes in His majesty, from the clefts of the rock in the wilderness. The state of the believer here is one, not of vision but of anticipation, not of presence with God but of pilgrimage to God. We behold from afar the goodly land, but it is from the top of Pisgah only,—the sunlit towers of

the city of God, but in momentary glimpses only, through the telescope of faith, from some lofty summit in the wilderness. We see Him, but it is by reflection only,—not “face to face, but darkly.” “Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” So the soul hungers still, and can find nothing in all the world to satisfy its hungerings. Amidst the utmost fulness of earthly content, there is still a deep void within that the world can never fill. There is food for the body, there is food for the mind,—there is food for the fancy, for the imagination, for the scientific instinct, the speculative reason, the social affections; but for the soul,—for the inmost, deepest life of our being,—for all that is truest and most divine in our immortal nature, all that links us with the divine, the unchanging, the everlasting, there is none in all the world,—none save only in that blessed “manna” which comes to us even in the desert from another clime, as an earnest and foretaste of the richer and better heritage to come hereafter. Meanwhile, who is there that truly lives, who will not, at least in his best moments, heartily respond to those plaintive accents, uttered long ago, but whose echoes linger still in the wilderness,—“As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” “I am a stranger on the earth; hide not Thy commandments from me.”

II. The wilderness is a place of *loneliness*. Here it is called “the solitary place,” the “desert,”—a place

deserted and forsaken of all living beings, and living things. Men pass through it or halt in it, but it is either alone, or in little companies, while all around solitude and silence reign. It is not, thank God, altogether so in this world. It is a wilderness indeed, but a wilderness not wholly desolate. God has set us here in families and in social groups, and has sweetened and brightened our lot by the joys of home, of kindly neighbourhood, and congenial friendship. It is seldom, even in our worst estate, that we are wholly alone, without a brother and without a friend. Yet there are times when the sense of loneliness strikes upon our hearts with terrible chillness, and reminds us that we are in a wilderness and a solitary place. When some beloved object is withdrawn from our sight—some one dear to us as our own soul, and in whom we had garnered up our hearts, oh, how instantly and terribly is the world changed;—how doth the fruitful garden become to us a waste, the joyous city a solitude—what a hunger of the heart,—when we listen for that voice which shall never speak to us again, search for that well-known face we shall never look upon again, until the resurrection of the just! Then, indeed, is our earthly Eden blasted, our gourd withered down to the roots, never to spring up again. Every star goes out in our sky, every flower withers, every spring is dried up.

Even though it may not be so, though our circle of loving intercourse remain yet unbroken, there are times still in which we are made to feel the solitude of the wilderness. Within the inmost circle of our social life,

there is an inner circle still, in which so far as human companionship is concerned, we must dwell alone. There are joys and sorrows there, with which no earthly friend can intermeddle, a secret and sacred chamber of our life where even they are strangers. How little in this world do even the nearest and dearest know each other ! Close as they may seek to come to us, there is still a chill interval of distance, a dull partition wall between them and the inmost sanctuary of our life. How hard it is to lay our hearts wholly bare to another, or to look down into the very depths of a heart laid bare ! And as we go on in life this loneliness increases. One by one our closest bosom friends are taken from us, and more and more we come in conflict with evils, in which the closest friendship can but little avail us. And so we become more and more alone, alone amid the gathering shadows and increasing sternness of the last stage of our earthly journey, alone at last in the valley of the shadow of death. Then, truly, if not before, we shall find it to be indeed "a wilderness and a solitary place." Happy for us if there be one who can follow even there—who can enter where no earthly friend or companion can come,—who can bear with us those burdens and share with us those griefs which they cannot touch nor even understand, who hath said, and will prove to all those who trust Him, as good as His word, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee,"—who teaches the true pilgrim to sing, even to the last, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me."

III. But, again, the wilderness is a place of *transition* and of *constant change*. Many pass through it, but none dwell in it. The Arab wanderer, the passing traveller pitches his tent there to-day, only to strike it and depart to-morrow. Even the fair oasis, with its palmy shades and carpet of fresh verdure and springs of living water, is a place of sojourning, not of habitation. Soon its scanty supply of herbage and of fruit is exhausted, and we must up and away to seek a similar resting-place elsewhere. It is a homeless place,—no settled abiding habitations of any kind there. It may be the way home,—the dreary interval between one home and another, but it cannot be itself a home.

So is it with this world. Here we have “no continuing city” or place of rest. We are here to-day, and away to-morrow. It is a place of transition, not of abiding. We are passing through it, not dwelling in it. Unlike the temporary dweller in the natural wilderness, we halt not even for a single day in the same spot, but pass incessantly on, while others follow us. Silently, ceaselessly, we are moving onwards along that path in which millions have gone before us, and in which there is no returning, and most of us leave not the trace of our feet on the sand to tell that we have been. Clearly, then, it is not home and cannot be: but is it to you, to me, “the way home?” Have you been taught to say with the apostle, “We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building with God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?” Then, indeed, may we go on, even in our desert path, singing,

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee,—in whose heart are the ways of them ; who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well ; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength ; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee.”

But thus we are lead to consider, ere we close, another view of this subject. We have hitherto been looking almost exclusively at the dark side of the truth before us. Let us now look for a little at the bright side. Having considered the *Trials*, let us now consider the *Comforts* of the wilderness. “The wilderness and the solitary place *shall be glad for them ; the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.*”

There are flowers even in the desert—few indeed and scanty—but fair, the fairer because they are so few. Some of the loveliest blossoms in all creation are those which grow in the far wilderness, or on naked cliffs where all other life dies,—left there apparently to remind us that God still is there, and can follow us even to those desolate scenes with His gracious consolation and tender care. “So the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them,”—“*for them,*” if for no others,—for God’s pilgrims, if for no other pilgrims. They have meat to eat which the world knoweth not of, joys with which it cannot intermeddle. To them flowers blossom and fountains flow, unseen and unknown to others. To their divinely-opened eyes the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose,—to their longing and thirsting hearts the dry land shall become a pool, and the thirsty

land springs of water. After all, true happiness lies not in that which is without, but in that within; beauty lies not so much in the object, as in the eye. To the bright soul all things in heaven and earth are bright,—for God the eternal sun and source of beauty shines upon them. He, if we wait on Him, can make the dreariest desert a garden, the gloomiest dungeon a palace, the flinty rock a gushing well. “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water.”—“Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness?”—“Whoso believeth, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” The things that were sweet before shall become tenfold sweeter now, and those that were bitter before shall bring sweetness in their bosom. Holy ordinances, holy Sabbaths, holy hours of retirement and of prayer, holy friendships and communings of heart with heart, holy duties, and sacrifices and ministries of love, holy memories of the past and anticipations of the future, all shall bloom to our eyes with a new beauty, and breathe to our senses with a new and heavenlier fragrance, when the Sun of Righteousness shines upon them, and the showers of blessing fall.

“Old friends, old scenes will lovelier be,
As more of heaven in each we see,
Some softening gleam of love and prayer
Shall dawn on every cross and care.”

“And an highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness” (v. 8). I said it was not home, but the way home, and to the true pilgrim it is a sure and a safe way. Like the caravan tracks in eastern deserts, or the lonely paths across our own heathy hills, it is indeed to a stranger very dim and obscure, but to a wayfarer accustomed to traverse those regions it is clear and distinct as a paved highway. By sure signs he knows it at a glance, and distinguishes it from all the trackless waste around, where others would become bewildered and lose their way. “The wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein.”

And it is safe, too, as well as plain. “No lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon” (v. 9). Those fierce roamers of the desert may prowl very near, and their dread roar may be often heard; but they cannot, dare not cross that sacred ground. “They shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.”—“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.”—“They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”—“I am persuaded that neither death nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

And so “the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Sion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away,”—(v. 10) shall *flee away*. They shall see those dark forms no more. Those birds of evil omen which have followed them all their life long,

and hovered round them and shadowed them with their wings of darkness up to the very gates of the city, shall then flee away,—away, away, into the far distance, till they pass out of sight, and are seen no more for ever.

And thus I can imagine some shining ones, companions once in tribulation, but companions now in glory and eternal rest, sitting down on the hills of immortality and retracing together the scenes of the long-vanished past, thinking and talking, amid the stillness of eternal peace, of those bitter griefs and sighs which once were theirs, in the world they have so long left behind, present, terribly present and real then, but now vanished as a passing dream. They are gone now, ages gone, gone for ever,—and they bless God that it is so, and yet they bless Him also, fervently bless Him, that those sorrows did not leave them one day earlier, not till they had accomplished a gracious purpose, and left a blessing, an eternal blessing behind them,—that those light afflictions, which were but for a moment, worked out for them a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. And the thought will impart a deeper adoration, and a loftier gratitude to their song, as they take up their harps again and sing, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”

Shall this blessedness be yours? Shall such as this be your retrospect of earth, when time shall be no more? Oh, make sure of this, by making sure of Christ, and entering in earnest on the heavenly pilgrimage. “So run, that ye may obtain!”

“ Now, I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate : and lo ! as they entered they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them unto them. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells of the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, ‘ Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.’ Now, just as the gate was opened to let in the men, I looked in after them and behold the city shone like the sun ; the streets also were paved with gold ; and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal.

“ There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without interruption, saying, ‘ Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord.’ And after that they shut up the gate ; which when I had seen, I wished myself among them.”

And which of us would not wish the same for ourselves also, at least at the end ? Who is there that would not pray, “ Gather not my soul with the wicked,” but “ Gather me with the just, make me to be numbered with Thy saints, in glory everlasting.” Let us so pray now, and labour and strive day by day to live more nearly as we pray.

XII.

HEAVEN'S BLESSEDNESS KNOWN, YET UNKNOWN.

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be.”—1 JOHN iii. 2.

THERE is a sense in which it is blessed to think that these words are not true. In more respects than one, and these to us by far the most interesting and practically important, we do know what we shall be. God has not left the eternal future of His people involved in utter and impenetrable mystery. The secret things indeed belong unto the Lord, and the things revealed unto us and to our children; but blessed be His name, among the things revealed are included all those which it most concerns us, with a view alike to our comfort and to our safety, to know. “Life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel,” and that light shines on every object, the sight of which is needful, at once to impart meaning and grandeur to life, and to shed a glory around the hour of dissolution. The essentials in short of our immortal life are revealed, the circumstantial only are for the present reserved. We know who we shall be, and where,—in what presence and in what society, in what essential condition of our moral and spiritual nature, and in what relation to God,

the light and life of all,—though what exactly we shall be, what the outward form and fashion, and the outward condition and surroundings of our future life, we know not, and are perhaps incapable now of knowing. We know much about the home, and about those whose presence and society shall, most of all, render that home dear and sacred and blessed; but of the house where that home shall be, and of that wide domain that shall stretch around it, and which shall be free to all the children for evermore, we know little or nothing.

Let us dwell on this thought a little, brethren. Let us, as it were, plant our feet firmly on what is known, before we cast our eyes forward towards the dark unknown. This is what the apostle does in the words of which our text forms a part. “*Now,*” he says, “*are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*” Thus what we know not is enclosed on either side by that which is known, and derives even already a certain reflected brightness from it. There is a spot of darkness here, but it is a spot on the face of the sun,—darkness encompassed round and almost lost amid the excess of light.

I. Looking, then, first of all at this bright side of the subject, I remark,

First,—That we shall be for ever what we are now. “Now are we the sons of God,” and we shall be sons for ever. It doth not yet appear what we shall be beyond this simple, but infinitely pregnant fact, that we

are sons, and shall remain sons, for evermore. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." It is a relation indissoluble and indestructible, save by the destruction of life itself; and we know that neither the Father nor the children can die. He lives for ever, and they for ever live in Him. Therefore "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us" from this dearest and most sacred form of love,—the love of the immortal Father toward His immortal children. Indeed, it is in a sense true of all of us, whether saints or sinners, that we shall be for ever what we are, or are at least becoming now. We shall be in eternity what we are making ourselves, or what grace is making us, in time. The same essential nature, and in the same essential state in which our last day on earth left us, we shall carry forward into the other world. Here there is no break, or line of separation between the seen and the unseen state. "He that is unjust shall," when he has crossed the awful barrier, even as before it, "be unjust still, and he that is holy, shall be holy still." If, then, you would desire to know what you shall be in regard to all that is most essential in your future being, ask yourselves what you are beginning to be, and are more and more becoming, as the brief space of this momentous spring-tide of our being is passing. But I remark again,

Secondly, That we shall be for ever immeasurably more than we are now. We shall, indeed, as we have seen,

advance in the same line in which we are moving now, but we shall be further on in that line. It will be the same nature, the same divine nature which we received in our second birth, but it will be that nature more fully grown, more richly and largely developed. "Now are we the sons of God," and we shall be sons still; but we shall be more son-like, shall have got deeper into the meaning, and further into the fulness and blessedness of sonship. There shall be a fuller and fuller "manifestation of the sons of God,"—at once to others, and to themselves. We shall have more of the heart of children, and shall know more of the heart of the Father. The sphere of our privilege shall be enlarged, and our capacity of enjoying it increased. The bud shall have become the flower—the restless brook, the deep, calm river—the heir of God, the possessor of all things. We shall be wiser, stronger, holier, truer, more gentle yet more brave, more lowly yet more exalted, more lamb-like yet more lion-hearted than we are now, nearer in station to God, and liker in heart to Christ. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." But this leads me to remark still further,

Thirdly,—That we shall be for ever in perfection what we are in embryo now. Then shall we be not only sons but shall be altogether and only sons. Now, indeed, we are the sons of God; but besides the true child's nature there is still much of the servant's, and even of the

slave's nature about us. "The glorious liberty of the children of God," the unclouded trust, the love which has for ever cast out fear, the free limbs and free buoyant hearts that have forgotten even the sensation of the chain, the eyes that in looking up into the Father's face have lost the very power of weeping, all this as yet is but as a dream, though a bright dream to us. We have indeed "the earnest" of these things,—but in that earnest there is still so much imperfection and sinful defect, so much bitterness in the sweet, so much discord in the music, so much selfishness in the love, so much fearfulness in the faith, so much dimness, and broken, partial uncertain light in the knowledge, so much sluggishness and slavish constraint in the obedience, so much of the body of death weighing down the upward, striving spirit of life,—that what we know scarcely gives us an idea of what the full and absolute fruition will be. The risen soul is yet so encumbered with the grave-clothes, and his eyes are so weak through long dwelling in the darkness, that the bright world, and bright life into which he has entered, is comparatively strange to him.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." We are sons, but yet we know comparatively little of the meaning, and the glory, and the blessedness of sonship. This, like everything else now, we know but in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. We shall reach at last to the full height and depth and length and breadth of sonship. We shall taste the full sweetness of the name, realise the full nobility of the

nature, rise to the full height and grandeur and unutterable blessedness of the relation. For we shall be conformed unto the image of God's Son, the eternal archetype and pattern of all sonship, and who in heaven and earth bears the Father's name. "Now are we the sons of God,"—that is grace. We shall be made like unto "the Son of God,"—and that is glory. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," but that is only because He to whom we shall be conformed, and in whom our life is hid, hath not yet appeared.

So much then, brethren, we know; and it is satisfactory surely to learn that the amount of that which is known in proportion to the unknown, is in truth so great. For

II. That which remains concealed is immeasurably less important to us than that which is revealed. Indeed, the unknown is important mainly because of the relation in which it stands to that which is known. Thus,

First, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be,"—*in regard to the locality and outward circumstances of our glorified life.* "I saw," says the rapt apostle in the Apocalypse, "a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." But where and what like that new and glorious world shall be,—what sun shall shine upon it, what fruits and flowers shall bloom on its soil, and what stars shall shine in its sky, what physical conditions and laws shall regulate its arrangements and control the movements of its inhabitants; whether it shall be this self-same earth in which

we now dwell, the theatre of so many wonders and of so grand and deathless a history,—the scene of the incarnation of the Son of God, of the sacred manger, of the life-giving Cross,—or some other and fairer planet untouched as yet by the blight of the curse, or the shadow of darkness,—or some bright and glorious sun, whose self luminous skies shall need no other sun or moon to brighten them, and where there shall be no winter and no night for evermore. These questions, and a thousand more, we cannot answer. “It doth not yet appear.” And yet what matter? The place is known to Him, and it is the best place we may be sure which infinite wisdom can plan and infinite love and power prepare for those whom He hath chosen to be with Himself for ever. “I go to prepare a place for you!” Surely this is enough for us, a place prepared by Him, and which He deems a meet abode for those whom He hath betrothed eternally unto Himself!

Secondly, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be” *in regard to the form and fashion of an immortal and glorified life*. That it shall be a social life, a state of blessed intercourse one with another, we do assuredly know. It is described under the idea of a family, of an assembly, of a congregation, of a city,—in every one of which the idea of society and of social activity and enjoyment forms the very primary and fundamental element. In its very essence, Hell is isolation, loneliness,—Heaven is unity, communion, love. But what shall be the particular conditions and forms of a society where there shall be no more husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, kings and subjects, high and low, rich

and poor, we cannot tell or even almost conceive. What, too, shall be our special organs and means of communication there? Shall we speak with the tongues of men or of angels? Shall we have some still closer and more immediate medium of intercourse between mind and mind, heart and heart, than the inadequate forms of articulate speech supply? Shall our very inmost souls be laid bare to one another in a world where no one has anything to conceal, or which he would blush to confess to all the world? We cannot tell. "It doth not yet appear." Only this we know, that the society of heaven shall be of the closest, most intimate, and perfect kind. We shall be nearer to God, nearer to Jesus, nearer to all who are dearest and most precious to us in the flesh and in the spirit, nearer to all the holy, the pure, the noble of every age and land, than we have ever been or even conceived. "God himself shall be with them and shall be their God."—"They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their Forehead."—"And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it. . . . And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." And,

Finally, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be" *in regard to the employments of the future life*. That it shall be a state of activity, indeed, and not of quiescent repose, we are well assured. It will be a state of rest, but of a rest that is perfectly consistent with a state in which they "rest not day nor night" in the holy service

of God, and with the intense and unwearying life of a world, of which it is written that "there shall be no night there." But what the special kind of work that shall occupy eternity, we know not. There shall be praises we know, and deepest adoration and profoundest study of the attributes and ways of God, eternal anthems, endless hallelujahs, and Christ's face shall be our ever open Bible, in which we shall learn more during a day than here in months and years,—but what else? On what more active service shall we be employed? Into what special field of holy enterprise directed? Shall there be science, fresh discovery, art, music such as we know it here, in heaven? Shall we be sent on special ministries, distant errands of love from world to world, from star to star? Shall we visit the distant pleiads or walk with shining feet the milky way, like those angels which are spirits, and those ministers which are as flames of fire? We know not. How should we know? "It doth not yet appear." This only we know, that God is not a God of the dead but of the living, and that the world of glory in which we dwell shall be pre-eminently a world of life, of intense life, of varied life, of noble and ennobling life, such as we have never known or dreamt of here.

But enough, brethren. Let us end where we began. "Now we are the sons of God." But are we? We have professed this, indeed, at His table, but have we professed a truth, a reality, or a mere delusion and pretence? Oh, it is a great word that, brethren,—“Now are we the sons of God,”—and if it be a lie only, and not a truth, what a terrible lie is it for a man to carry in his

right hand to the eternal world, to the judgment-seat of Christ. Oh, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith!" Rest not until you can, with humble, yet well-assured confidence, take this blessed, sublime, awfully sweet and sacred title to yourself, and then all things else shall be yours,—everything that is precious, glorious, divine, in time and through eternity. "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him,—for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

THE battle of the faith has again changed from a skirmish of outposts to a combat as for life or death. From discussions on creation and the Pentateuch, the antiquity of man, and the unity of the race, the scene of conflict has quickly shifted to still higher and holier ground, and the embattled legions of faith and unbelief struggle around the very central citadel of truth itself. It is no longer the authority of Moses only that is now in question, but that of Christ; not the historical integrity of the early annals of the kingdom of God, but the very existence of a kingdom of God on the earth at all. Once more it is denied, and once more are we summoned to maintain that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is come in the flesh; that there has been a divine supernatural intervention in the affairs of men; that the wondrous life portrayed in the Gospels which has created the Church and new created the world is a reality and not a fiction or a dream.

In this form the Church at once and most gladly accepts the contest. It is here pre-eminently that her position is impregnable, and it is here that the last and decisive battle of the truth must be fought and won.

Triumphant here, our ultimate and complete victory on every other field is a question only of time; defeated here, there is nothing more remaining at stake worth contending for. If the life of Christ be indeed supernatural and divine, then all that precedes and all that follows it in the same train of events—the preparatory dispensations and the subsequent results—necessarily partake of the same character; if simply human and natural, then all else before and after, from the earliest patriarchal to the latest Christian times, is simply human and natural too. Everything, then, alike in profane and in so-called sacred history, will resolve itself into a mere matter of human historical development, more or less pure, more or less exalted, more or less in a loose pantheistic sense divine, but still in its essential nature human and only human still. It is thus not the problem broached by Colenso, grave and vital as that problem is, but that which has been stated anew, and with such rare eloquence and literary skill by Ernest Renan, that constitutes the real question of the day—the question of a standing or a falling Christianity for our age, and for every age.

If we have thus ground for gratulation in the form in which the great argument is now raised, and the direct and decisive issue to which it brings us, we have none the less in the present aspects and progress of the contest. One by one have successive hypotheses, framed to explain the fact of Christianity as a historical phenomena on infidel or naturalistic principles, been tried and found wanting, and thus the way has been prepared

as by a process of exhaustion for a final and absolute solution.

There are, in truth, only three positions essentially distinct, which are logically possible, on this whole question. Either the life of Christ, as we now possess it, is simply true or simply false, or partly true and partly false. It is either a true history, or a lying fiction, or a mixture of fact and fable, of real life and of legendary romance. The first is the position of the Christian believer; the second, practically at least, of the old infidel school; the last, of modern rationalism and philosophic unbelief. Of these, the second may be said to be now unanimously and on all hands rejected. Denounced by the Christian believer as an impious calumny, it is equally repudiated by the modern critical school as a historical impossibility. Whatever the life of Christ may be finally held to be, most certainly at least, by the mature and deliberate judgment of all reasonable men, friends and foes alike, it is not the work of mere imposture and dishonest fiction. It is fundamentally, at least, a real history—a history, too, the most wonderful and momentous in all the annals of time, whether that history has descended to us in a pure and unmixed, or in a corrupted and legendary form. The question is thus greatly simplified, and the ground of contest narrowed.

One of the only three possible hypotheses is now finally exploded and put out of court. The older and coarser infidelity is dead. The spirit of Voltaire and of Tom Paine is vanished. That cold, mocking devil—

that careless, sneering Mephistopheles of unbelief—that mean, shallow-hearted philosophy which could believe Jesus of Nazareth to be an impostor, and His martyr-followers charlatans and knaves, has been exorcised, and is gone from the world, we trust, for ever. Men are too serious at least for mere sneering now. They may or they may not accept the gospel history as we now possess it as true. They may believe or they may not believe, or they may halt and hesitate between faith and unbelief. They may cling to Christianity as for their life, or they may stand aloof or turn away from it, whether with utter recoil, or with a lingering wistfulness as loth to part with that bright vision for ever; but at least they deal with the subject for the most part seriously, and are in no mood to play and trifle with a subject, to them as to us, so awful, or to dismiss it with a coarse jest or a glittering *bon mot*. And as the spirit of this school is obsolete, its fundamental position is a proved and admitted absurdity. The world has fairly found it out at last. We all instinctively feel that it can do nothing for us either intellectually or morally—nothing to aid the struggling reason, or help the solution of the great problem with which all alike must wrestle. It raises difficulties, but it removes none. It explains nothing, but only scouts and ridicules that whereby alone the enigma of life and of human history can be explained. It leaves the entire fabric of modern history intact, and seeks to render its annals credible by simply ignoring that one fact which dominates its whole course, and forms the main factor of its life from first to last.

Verily, of all unhistorical and irrational hypotheses, the simple rejection of the gospel history is the most unhistorical and irrational. If there were no Christ, or if the Christ that was had not something at least of that moral grandeur and power which our Gospels ascribe to Him, and which has made His image live within the heart of humanity ever since, what account shall we give, in the light either of history or of common sense, of Christendom? This monstrous hypothesis, then, may be now wholly eliminated from the problem before us.

There remain two, and only two, possible solutions to choose from. Either the Christ of the Gospels is true, or the Christ of Strauss, or of Renan. Jesus did live, and lived a great, glorious, and wonderful life. The only question is, what exactly that life was—whether that related by the four evangelists or something different. From that life the Church, Christianity, our whole modern civilization, sprang, but how it sprang, how that mighty tree grew from that mysterious mustard seed, is the point still in debate. For the answer to both questions the Church points to the Gospels. In them she maintains is to be found the adequate, and the only adequate, explanation of the facts of history. Admit the wondrous life they related to be true, and true as they related it, and all that has followed since becomes clear, consistent, intelligible. A divine Christianity naturally and fitly springs from a divine Christ, a new creation of humanity and of the world from a true creative act and manifestation of God. A new

stream of life, intellectual, moral, spiritual, gushes up from a new springhead of life. The world since Christ has become other in its inmost, deepest being than it was before, because a power unknown before has entered into its life. There is a kingdom of God on earth, in short, a kingdom radiant still with celestial light and instinct with vivifying, transforming power, because eighteen hundred years ago the kingdom of God came with power.

All is thus abundantly plain and simple. The history reads straight on and most luminously. There is nothing that needs to be explained; the whole phenomenon, as it stands before us on the grand canvas of history, explains itself. Part fits into part, and all, from first to last, from the birth at Bethlehem to the conversion of to-day, stands in such a perfect harmony that it seems as if either all must be true or none. Apostolic faith, evangelistic zeal and love, martyr constancy, glorified lives, victorious deaths, the new life of nations, and renovation and purification of all true human relations, the fresh exuberance of benignant virtues and graces till then unknown; the resistless march of the new faith from victory to victory, from the cross of Golgotha to the capitol of Rome, and then onward through all the ages until now; the undying life of the Church and its ever-fresh renovation amid all else, which in succession fades away and dies; the fresh vigour infused into the frame even of the old and decrepit world; above all, that sacred image of unearthly grandeur and beauty which a few simple annalists first

gave to the world, but which, when once given, could never be forgotten, but has lived ever since in the heart of the race, the unapproached ideal of every highest thought and noblest aspiration—all this, indeed, is exceeding wonderful and strange, yet still quite conceivable when traced back to so wonderful and divine a source: but otherwise it is a hopeless contradiction and enigma.

To this conclusion the modern schools of unbelief demur. Accepting the historical phenomenon substantially as we have stated it, they reject the conclusion which we have drawn from it. They can explain satisfactorily, they maintain, all the facts of the case without the admission of a superhuman Christ, or any superhuman intervention whatever in the affairs of men. Jesus may have been a mere man, and lived a mere human, however pure and noble life, and all that has since followed have fallen out precisely as it has done. "The most beautiful thing in the world," to use Renan's words—the gospel history itself and the divine life which it enshrines, and which has left its long track of glory through the whole course of succeeding time, "may have proceeded from an obscure and purely popular elaboration"—from a few simple incidents of real human life, embalmed by affection and magnified and glorified by a creative imagination. Is this, then, indeed so? Can the disciples of Tübingen really make their case out? Does Christianity, simply as a historical phenomenon, admit of the explanation they propose? This is the question before us—the one

surviving question between faith and unbelief from the long and chequered conflict of ages. In the mythical hypothesis, whether in its original integrity or as modified and adapted to meet the exigencies of more recent investigation, unbelief is playing its last stake—fighting its last battle. Let it be worsted here, and its defeat in the historical ground at least is complete and final, and nothing logically remains for it but an absolute acceptance of the only other possible alternative—the historical truth of the written Gospels, and of the divine human life which they enshrine.

We shall have occasion to show in subsequent lectures how it fares with this theory when submitted to the ordeal of strict historical investigation. I shall be able, I trust, to show that imposing, and, to a certain class of minds, attractive as it may appear as a mere piece of ingenious historical construction, it at once collapses and falls to pieces when brought in contact with the actual and inexorable facts of the case. To meet the exigencies of the hypothesis our existing Gospels must be carried down to the second century; but then, when questioned, they positively refuse to be carried down there. They cannot, without doing violence to every historical principle, be torn out of the first Christian age; they cannot be forced into the second. Whatever difficulties may attend their criticism as authentic relics of the apostolic period, these difficulties vanish into insignificance in face of the utter confusion and perplexity attendant on any other supposition. Constrained accordingly by these considera-

tions, the latest and most popular expounder of the legendary hypothesis abandons this position as hopeless, and, while accepting substantially the received date of the fourth Gospel, shifts the composition of the other three from the second century back again to a period far within the first. But in thus escaping from one difficulty he runs straight in the face of another—

“Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdin.”

While the mythical theory will not fit the historical date, the historical date will not fit the mythical theory. So you can save the one only by the sacrifice of the other. Strauss does this in one way, Renan in the other. The older and warier writer saves the theory by doing violence to the historical facts. The latter and more impulsive accepts the facts to the destruction of the theory. Such is the inevitable dilemma of unbelief; you may take your choice between history and theory, but you cannot at the same time do equal homage to both; the inexorable condition of the problem forbids it.

In this way I cannot help attaching much more importance to the *Vie de Jesu*, and the fresh discussion of the great argument to which it has given rise than many of the friends of truth may be disposed to do. As a mere recast and popular rendering of a theory already verging to decay, the book of Renan is no doubt of comparatively slight importance; but as a virtual surrender of the fundamental principle of that theory by one of its ablest and most vaunted disciples, its im-

portance can scarcely be overstated. It is the clear pronouncement of cultured and philosophic unbelief against the cardinal position on which cultured and philosophic unbelief had finally taken its stand. It is the very branch by which it was sustained suicidally cut by its own hand. "On the whole," says he, "I admit as authentic the four canonical Gospels; all, in my opinion, date from the first century, and the authors are, generally speaking, those to whom they are attributed." The admission is all the more important as it evidently was not the author's original position. He had started apparently, like the other disciples of the legendary hypothesis, with a prepossession in favour of the late date, and consequent utterly unhistorical character of the Gospels, but further reflection and inquiry amid the actual scenes of the history itself irresistibly forced upon him another conclusion. That which might be read as mere second century romance in the salons of Paris could no longer be so read on the brow of Olivet, or amid the shadows of Gethsemane. With the sight of the sacred soil, the unchanged though marred and dishonoured face of the land, consecrated by the footsteps of God, the mist of theory passed from his eyes, and the vivid life-like reality of the whole picture flashed out before him like a revelation: "I have traversed in all directions the country of the Gospels, I have visited Jerusalem, Hebron, and Samaria. Scarcely any important locality of the history of Jesus has escaped me. All this history, which at a distance seems to float in the clouds of an unreal world, thus

took a form, and a solidity which astonished me. The striking agreement of the facts or with the country which served it as a framework, was like a revelation to me. I had before my eyes a fifth Gospel torn but still legible, and henceforth through the recitals of Matthew and Mark, in place of an abstract being, whose existence might have been doubted, I saw living and moving an admirable human figure."

At this point, indeed, Renan stops. Having made this concession, or rather this confession, of his own historic belief, he proceeds for the most part as if it had never been made. Having surrendered the fundamental position on which the whole legendary hypothesis rests, he goes on to expound that hypothesis and adapt it to present exigencies, just as though it remained intact. He removes the keystone of the arch, but the airy structure still stands. The historic data are totally changed, but the results continue still the same. Strauss could regard our gospels as legendary, because of late compilation, and therefore unauthentic; Renan holds them to be both early and authentic, and yet legendary. Indeed, while examining and testing his materials, he does homage so far to the facts of history, in handling and using them, he proceeds on a method wholly arbitrary. Now he reads the gospel narrative as literal history; now as wild romance—just as suits his purpose. In one evangelist the discourses are undoubtedly genuine, but the narratives of fact apocryphal; in another the facts are mainly true, but the discourses fabulous—not that in either case there is anything in the style

and manner of the historian to suggest or even to permit such a discrimination, but because to meet the exigencies of his theory it ought to be so. Judged by every test, even of fair internal criticism, it is the same Matthew who records the vivid words of Jesus, and depicts, with an almost photographic distinctness, the scenes amid which He lived and moved, who relates also the daily incidents of His history; and yet the one, according to this author, is a picture even marvellous for its truthful fidelity from the life, and the other a tissue of fiction. It is the same John who repeats to us the words of the upper chamber, and who introduces us to the family of Bethany, but in the one case he is the manufacturer of imaginary discourses, in the other the historian of sacred and indelible memories. The same writers, in short, are in the same book, and even often within the limits of a few lines the most exact of annalists and the wildest of romancers; and yet the history and the romance are so identical in style and manner, and so inextricably interwoven through the whole texture of the narrative, that it is impossible to disentangle the one from the other.

Such is literally, and without exaggeration, the position of Renan. He recognises in the gospels generally a vivid stamp of originality and truth, which flashed out before him on the spot where their true character might best be judged like a revelation; but that originality and truthfulness extend only so far as he chooses, or rather so far as the foregone conclusion which dominates his thoughts will permit. But while the incon-

sistencies and contradictions of this author are his own, the great truth to which he unwillingly bears witness is for us and for all men. Though the gossamer creation of his constructive fancy shall dissolve again into airy nothing, the concession extorted from him by the irresistible force of evidence will not soon be forgotten by Christians. The fifth gospel, which he found in Judea, and laid open to all the world, cannot be closed or buried out of sight again. Meanwhile, perhaps, the heaviest blow which the school of Strauss has of late years received in the historical field is that which has been dealt by Renan. It would appear as if the new legendary Christianity were destined to die like an old Roman by its own hand.

Let me again remind you that the theory which thus gives way in our hands—which cannot endure the rough handling even of its own friends—is now the only alternative to the simple acceptance of Christianity as true. Either the gospel history as we now possess it, with its pervading supernaturalism, with all the mysterious halo of superhuman greatness and miraculous power surrounding its central figure, is true; or it must have originated in some such way as Strauss has imagined, but has so conspicuously failed to reconcile with the historical conditions of the case. We are compelled to choose between the Christ of the evangelists and the Christ of Strauss (for the Christ of Voltaire and of Paine is long since dead), and if the latter prove only a spectral illusion and vanish into thin air, the grand and sacred form of the other, which the Church of God

throughout all the world has for eighteen hundred years confessed and adored, must henceforth occupy the ground alone.

Meanwhile, the positive evidence for the truth of the gospel, historical, moral, and experimental, remains as valid and as strong as ever. While false solutions of the great problem of Christianity are breaking down, those visible and patent signatures of the divine power and presence which point to the true solution shine out in undimmed lustre before our eyes. The simple narrative of the actual facts as they are writ large on the page of history is, after all, the best proof of the divine hand that was at work in them throughout.

Foreshadowed by ancient oracle and mystic type and symbol, at once the bright expectation of Jewish saints, and the dim dream of yearning hearts in other and unenlightened lands, there appeared at last in the fulness of time a glorious spiritual Deliverer and King, who, while immeasurably transcending, met and fulfilled them both. He lived a life such as the world has never since been able to forget, and died a death which in its power and effect has proved mightier than all the lives ever lived on the earth before. He spake as never man spake—in words, by the admission even of an adversary, “at once mild and terrible, and possessing a divine strength and splendour which, as it were, emphasizes them, and detaches and distinguishes from all others,” and if He did not really work miracles He was Himself in His singular and unapproached grandeur, a miracle, and impressed, at least on the minds of His disciples,

a conviction of His superhuman power and greatness stronger than death itself. They believed that by His touch and by His word He had healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, hushed the tempests of the sea, raised the dead, and at last Himself burst the fetters of the tomb, and ascended to heaven in triumph before their eyes, and while this belief was strong enough to give a new direction to, and mould the whole course of their lives, they were ready at any moment to seal its sincerity with their blood.

Of this wondrous life and death we have four separate and more or less independent accounts from the hands professedly of contemporaries and eye-witnesses, which, while stamped with the clearest signatures of authenticity, seem by the very character of their subject-matter irresistibly to prove their own truth. While differing in style and manner, and in every circumstance of minute delineation and grouping, the representation of the wondrous person and history which form their common subject is yet so manifestly one, and marked by such a perfect harmony, freshness, and life-like reality, as to be beyond the reach of fiction. An unmistakable individuality stamps the whole picture and pervades its every line and shade. All the elements of which it is composed, whether of words or deeds, leading events, or subordinate circumstances, ordinary human experiences or miraculous transactions, are in such absolute keeping, both with each other and with the great central figure to whom they seem as of right to belong, as to form together an unique and indivisible whole, insomuch that

it must be true absolutely and altogether or not at all. The canvas lives and speaks, and, homely as are its materials and rude the hands that covered it, a sacred and divine glory is diffused over it, which arrests all eyes and moves all hearts, and which has caused the matchless image which it reveals to sink into the heart of humanity and live there for ever. Verily, if the life of Christ is not divine, the Gospels are. If they are not the faithful and exact delineation of a supernatural life, they are the embodiment of a grand and unearthly thought, which, in the whole circumstances of the case, must be regarded as scarcely less supernatural. An incarnate God is ushered on the stage, and made to speak and act before us, and mingle familiarly with the common incidents and scenes of life, and gradually to unfold and reveal Himself to our eyes, not by laboured description or theatrical displays, but by the simple annals of everyday words and deeds, and He sustains the character. He bears and demeans Himself like a God. Everything, from His first recorded words in the temple to His last cry on the cross, is in perfect keeping alike with the character and with itself. Not a word escapes His lips, not a look, or step, or lightest trait, ever betrays itself that is unworthy of One who, being the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person, should yet walk this earth in human form. A divine majesty sits upon His brow; an indescribable sacredness surrounds His person, such as belongs to no other picture drawn by mortal hands.

It is not Christians alone who feel this. Even the world

and the world's own prophets have more or less consciously felt and owned it. How tenderly do they touch—if, indeed, they have any spark of pure and noble feeling in them at all—the adorable person of the Lord, however roughly or recklessly they may handle in other respects the inspired records of His life. They have no heart either for cold logic or bitter scorn when they approach the sacred haunts of Bethany and of Calvary. They may reject His miracles, they may cavil at the alleged contradictions of His biographers, but they cannot but revere and love Himself. Prejudice is disarmed, and the sharp pen drops from the relentless critic's hand as he meets the eye of Him who looks upon us with such benignant majesty from every page.

Thus the Galilean holds the world in awe, though as yet He has not fully conquered. How has this transcendent image lived amid all changes of time and circumstances in the memory of mankind, drawn to itself all pure, and high, and noble, and tender thoughts, and proved the germ of whatever has been true and strong and holy in the life alike of individuals and of nations. How has it kept itself apart from every other personal or historic reminiscence,—towered in unapproachable majesty above every other ideal, dwelt apart, as in a most holy sanctuary, alone! How irresistibly does it impress itself upon us, as something essentially and specifically different from anything else ever known or conceived of on earth—the true holy of holies of humanity and of all history, to which we instinctively turn in all times of deepest thoughtfulness,

or sorrow, or doubt, or fear, as the very centre of rest and peace. And yet, all this we are asked to believe is the creation of one or two Jewish peasants, or of some anonymous compilers of floating legends, writing no one knows when or where.

Nor does the miracle end here. The life of Christ, whether real or unreal, is no mere vision or sacred souvenir of the past. Though dead He still lives. Like Samson of old, while in His life He struggled apparently in vain with enemies too strong for Him, in His death He shook the very pillars of the world, and prepared the way for a new epoch—a new form and order of things which continues to this hour. His very name, and words, and memory, with the strange power that attended them, breathed new life into the nations, and fresh moulded humanity. Souls sunk in slumber and hopeless apathy awoke at His bidding, and the dry bones of the world arose. Thousands everywhere recognised in His words the very voice of God, and found in them the key of life's mystery, the opening of the gate of heaven. Thus, if the first evidence of Christianity is Christ, the second is Christendom. "*Si vis monumentum circumspice.*" Our whole modern life, and all that is purest, noblest, and best, alike in what man is and in what he aspires to be, reposes on the foundation of this wondrous life and death. We are what we are so far as there is anything good and blessed in life at all, mainly because Christ lived, or else because a few rude unlettered peasants dreamed that He had.

In fine, in the cleansed and healed lives of thousands,

in the choicest fruits of our civilization and highest culture, in the fairest virtues and noblest deeds which bless and dignify humanity, in our universities, and schools, and infirmaries, and asylums for the helpless and forlorn, and all the other forms and agencies of God-like mercy, in the very ideas of humility and self-sacrifice, and inviolable truth and sacred love, in the ever-enduring, ever-renewed life of the Church, while all things else yield to the inevitable law of death and change, in the gracious tears of penitents, in the shining lives of saints,—in all this, and in much more which time would fail me to tell, but which we all see before our eyes day by day, yea, in the very light, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, which shines around us, and the atmosphere of life we daily breathe—behold the present evidence of the unchanging power and godhead of Him who died and rose again and liveth for evermore. This is the true miracle of miracles ; that beside which all other miracles seem common, and fall naturally into their proper place, as the befitting and inevitable accidents of an economy from first to last supernatural and divine. The one grand miracle of Christianity began with the birth of Bethlehem, and continues to this hour, and belongs not to one age or country only, but to all. Christ came into the world in the fulness of time, and He has been in it ever since, and He is in it still. Surely in all this we have not the result of a clever fiction or a collection of legendary tales, but the very handiwork and footprints of God.

To sum up all in a few words. The first evi-

dence of Christianity is Christ—the glory that shines in the face of the incarnate God as reflected on the gospel page. The second is Christendom—the divine and supernatural result of the divine supernatural history. The third is the Bible, resplendent on every page with the light of inspiration. The fourth is the Church—the ever living, ever fresh, and young, and buoyant body, of the ever-living, ever reigning Head. And the last is the soul,—witnessing from its inmost depths to the truth of that gospel whose every cry it answers, whose every wound it heals, whose every highest aspiration it meets and satisfies,—that true *testimōnium animæ naturaliter Christianæ*, of which Tertullian so grandly spoke of old. Let us see to it that we all possess at least this last evidence—this witness in ourselves which nothing can countervail or shake—that clear sight and full persuasion of the truth which is ever given to them who in real earnest cry and wait for the light. Then, as the divine work within us witnesses to the truth of the divine economy above and around us, we shall not only believe but know the truth, and be enabled amid all the conflicts of opinion and failings of men's hearts, with calm, resolute voice, to echo the words of the apostle, “We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

LECTURE II.

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

THE character of Christ, or in other words, His whole personality as it comes out in life and action, is beyond all question a reality in one of two senses. It is either a supernatural fact, or a supernatural thought. It is the fruit of a divine miraculous birth, or the embodiment of a divine conception, in the whole circumstances of the case scarcely less miraculous. Either Jesus lived, and lived just such a life as the evangelists have related, or the idea of such a life had in some inscrutable way entered into the minds of a few unlettered men, and been by their unskilled pens embodied in a biography, which in point of life-like reality, individual unity, and sacred majesty and glory, stands unparalleled in all literature, whether fictitious or real. If God incarnate did not walk the earth in human form, in the land of Judea, and in the days of Augustus and Tiberius Cæsar, He at least lives on the canvas of the four evangelists, and from thence speaks in word and deed to men of all time. We recognise, as we look, the present God.

There is a glory around that head; there is a majesty

in that countenance ; there is a power in every word and look and action, which irresistibly speaks itself divine. All men have felt this more or less, and have in their hearts done homage to it. The shadow of Christ is on the world, and has been for eighteen hundred years ; and a divinity doth hedge around the sacred person of this King, forbidding all irreverent approach. The noblest and purest spirits have ever felt this the most ; and whatever their speculative doubts or difficulties, have instinctively cast their shoes from off their feet as they approach the holy ground. Men may not recognise the Sun of Righteousness as really shining in the firmament of history ; but they cannot help seeing its reflection on the stream of the evangelistic narrative, and confessing, that whether real or imaginary, it is beyond all parallel and all conception bright and glorious.

It will be at once seen, that the argument with which we are now engaged proceeds on no assumption of the historical authenticity of the documents in which the life of Christ has been enshrined ; but simply on that life itself, as it stands forth from the canvas, luminous in its own truth and glory. We maintain that it does not need to be proved, but that it proves itself. We can even suppose that we know nothing whatever of those documents, except the representation they thus give of the person and character of Christ ; nothing either of their authorship or their history, or the medium of their transmission to our times. We can conceive that they had been found but yesterday, with-

out name or date or illustrative note of any kind, in some old Syrian or Egyptian monastery, amid heaps of other mouldering parchments of by-gone days; and we maintain that even then, a true appreciative eye might discern that the life-history they record is true, and that it is divine. We may know nothing of the mirror on which we gaze, of the hand that made it, or whence it came; and its surface, too, may be dim and worn, and marred here and there by partial roughnesses, and spots of rust, which offend the curious eye; and yet we may be perfectly sure that the image reflected on its surface is a living man, though He stands behind us unseen, and not a picture or a mask. We may never have seen that face before, or ever conceived or dreamed of any like it; but we see it now, and are as sure of its objective truth and reality as we are of our own existence. We may not be able clearly to explain why we have this full and absolute assurance, yet still it is so. We may not be able by logical arguments to justify our assurance, but still we are sure. We may be unable, perhaps, to give any other account of the matter, or say anything more about it than this, that it produces this impression upon us, and produces it irresistibly, and would, we cannot doubt, do the same on any other clear and open eye as well. We are sure that there is a living man behind us, because there is the express image of a living man before our eyes. Such an image, as we know from all experience, never was produced save by the reflected form of a living man, and never can be. Now, it is in something of this way, though, as we shall

see, with even a larger measure of rational ground, that the simple reading and meditative study of the gospel annals, conveys to us as with the force of a revelation, the assurance that He of whom we read is a real man, and yet that He is more than man. The life of Jesus, in short, authenticates the Gospels, far more than the Gospels authenticate it. God incarnate lives and moves and speaks—almost breathes, in those artless but wondrous pages, and illuminates and glorifies them by His presence throughout.

Were we to endeavour to put this argument into a logical form, we should perhaps best express it in the two following propositions :—

I. On the supposition that the life of Christ is indeed divine, the entire portraiture of that life, as given in the Gospels, is in entire harmony and perfect keeping with it.

II. It could not have been so, the whole circumstances of the case being considered, unless it had been real. To a brief illustration and development of these two positions, we shall devote what remains of the present lecture.

First, then. If we suppose the life of Christ to have been indeed a divine life, then everything which the evangelists have recorded of Him is in harmony with the supposition. A divine character is assigned to Him, and He fully sustains the character. He speaks and acts and bears Himself throughout in a manner befitting it, and worthy of it. Alike in word and in deed, on great occasions and on small, amid miraculous events and everyday scenes ;—in childhood, in youth, and in full strong man-

hood;—at the marriage feast, the solemn funeral, the convivial meeting, the synagogue assembly;—flushed with holy indignation, and melting with unutterable tenderness;—reasoning with the doctors, denouncing the Pharisees, and taking the little children in His arms;—radiant with transfiguration light, and bowed with mysterious and infinite sorrow;—walking on the sea, sitting weary by the well, reclining in the upper chamber, kneeling in the garden, hanging on the cross,—everywhere and always, and all through the crowded details of a free and artless biography He is the same,—ever worthy of Himself, and of the awfully great and sublime position assigned to Him. His biographers start with an ideal that is divine, and their subject fulfils that ideal. The deep stamp of the God and of the man, or rather of the God-man in perfect and indissoluble union, is on it all. This may be said to be, practically at least, on all hands admitted.

Whatever exceptions some may have taken to particular traits in the character of Christ, or special words or deeds imputed to Him by the evangelists, it will not be denied that the total impression made upon us, by His whole recorded history, the combined result of all His words and deeds and ways of life, as by them related, is just what we have said. An image of indescribable beauty, power, and greatness, which we instinctively call divine, rises up before us as we read, and becomes clearer and clearer to us, more and more exalted in stately majesty, as we steadfastly contemplate and deeply ponder it. Nowhere is this more conspicuously

apparent than in the writings of some unbelievers especially of the present day. In the recent work, for example, of Ernest Renan, it is at once striking and passing sad to mark the continual conflict in his mind, between the bright vision of a divine and unearthly Christ which still haunts him, after the true living Christ is gone, and those low and unworthy constructions of His recorded words and deeds, to which the necessities of his position force him : now speaking of Him as a son of God, and even by pre-eminence *the* son of God, the greatest of all the sublime spirits that ever visited the earth, whose glory and life-giving influence on humanity and the world shall never pass away, and now attributing to Him traits of weakness and infirmity below the level even of ordinary men ; now, as penetrating the deepest mysteries of being and of the divine nature ; now, as dooming rich men to hell simply because they were rich, the minions of earthly prosperity to everlasting tears, because they had had their joys here. Yet with all this incredible inconsistency and contradiction, the divine ideal which the Gospels reveal, is rather merely defaced and marred, than utterly destroyed. Ever and anon, through the glittering haze of sentimental French jargon, do we seem to catch the lineaments of a form, which we dare not, with him, to decorate with flowers, or compliment with pompous eulogy, but must worship and adore. Even the shadow of the cross seems for a moment to fall upon him, and to soften him as he writes such words as these : “ Rest now in thy glory, noble initiator ! Thy work is com-

pleted, thy divinity is established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thy efforts crumble through a flaw. Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, thou shalt be present from the height of thy divine place, in the infinite consequences of thy act. At the price of a few hours of suffering, which have not even touched thy great soul, thou hast purchased the most complete immortality. For thousands of years the world will extol thee. Banner of our contradictions, thou wilt be the sign around which will be fought our fiercest battles. A thousand times more living, a thousand times more loved since thy death, than during the days of thy pilgrimage here below, thou shalt become to such a degree the corner-stone of humanity, *that to tear thy name from this world would be to shake it to its foundations*. Between thee and God men will no longer distinguish. Complete conqueror of death, take possession of thy kingdom, whither, by the royal road thou hast traced, ages of adorers will follow thee.” *

Yes! it was indeed a royal road, and those were royal feet that trod it in power, and in majesty, and the world to this day, as witnessed by this its favourite prophet, hears the echoes of them. Let us not be misunderstood. In those poor tinsel words of rhetorical eulogy, in those vain trappings of the mock king of Israel, we do not recognise the image of our Lord. Rather is it only a lifeless waxen model, fashioned by one who merely worked out his own ideal, but yet who had caught sight of an ideal higher than his own, and never been able

* Vie de Jesu.

wholly to forget it. That higher ideal will still be recognised by every unbiassed student, as the true and only possible one. The Parisian Christ will not supplant the Christ of Bethany and of Calvary, as that which mankind will regard, as either the more life-like and credible in itself, or more worthy to be cherished as a sacred treasure in its heart of hearts. This false Christ is a contradiction, an impossible combination of incongruous and incompatible elements; the Christ of the Gospels is a divine and perfect whole, in which all the parts fit together, and mutually confirm each other. If ever God incarnate dwelt on earth, He must have been just such an one as these wondrous annals have described Him, and such as their thoughtful and reverent students have ever, with more or less of adequateness, conceived Him. He whom they speak of as God, is as they have drawn Him altogether and unmistakably god-like. That which, according to their testimony eighteen hundred years ago, men saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears, and with their hands handled of the Word of Life, still fills these pages with His glory, and in them He is yet present with us, even as though we beheld Him, and heard Him, and touched Him still.

We do not attempt any full and detailed development of this argument. To do this would imply a complete portraiture of Him of whose divine glory we speak, and from such a task we utterly shrink. For the utmost that can be done in this way, or at least has been done, we are content to refer you to the powerful work of Dr Young on the "Christ of History," a complete answer

by anticipation to the romance of Renan; and to the exquisite chapter on "the Character of Jesus" in Horace Bushnell's treatise on "Nature and the Supernatural." If it were possible to exhibit the beauty of the rose, by taking it to pieces, and examining its fair petals with keen microscopic scrutiny, one by one, or the glory of the sun by prismatically resolving its separate beams, then in such works as these we have demonstration irresistible of the divine glory of Christ and of Christianity. But any such mere description, or analytical estimate, is from the nature of the case inadequate. It is the whole image and idea, or rather living Person of the Christ, as He moves, breathes, speaks in the Gospels, rather than any separate facts or traits, that irresistibly proclaims Him divine. We are ever more powerful and convincing when we confine ourselves to general expressions, and appeal to what all men feel, than when we attempt any detailed exhibition of attributes. Any one who, with aught of serious thoughtfulness, or even ordinary susceptibility of impression, has read the Gospels, has inevitably caught from them a far more distinct and living conception of what He is, than any words of mere description can convey. Then does there rise up before us, silently, spontaneously, not manufactured out of parts and shreds pieced together, but shining out through the veil of sacred acts and words, that very form and face divine before which the unbelieving Thomas fell down adoring,—in which gentleness and power, lowliness and majesty, tenderness and strength, awful purity and unutterable compassion,

vastness of thought and purpose, and condescension to the homeliest facts and scenes of life, sympathy without softness, benignant forbearance without indulgent weakness, sanctity without a shade of moroseness or ascetic rigour, sublimity without effort, majesty without distance, decision without extremeness, burning zeal and entirest consecration of heart without a shade of morbid enthusiasm, humiliation, poverty, shame, without degradation,—all blend together in an image of divine human grandeur and beauty, such as thought had never conceived before, such as language must ever fail to express. Verily, if here we find not God,—behold not as in a glass the brightness of His glory, it is not too much to say we shall never find Him at all.

Second. We have now room only for a very brief illustration of our second proposition, viz., that the evangelists never could have given such a portraiture of Christ, never could have thus drawn a full-length, and truly worthy picture of a God-man, unless it had been real. Let us start here with making a very extravagant supposition. Let us try to imagine it possible that they could have themselves conceived such a character as that of Jesus—created it through the mere power of imagination or pious reverie, either out of nothing, or out of the broken and legendary reminiscences of an actual but merely human life ; or rather (for in such a case a joint creation is preposterous) that one of them, the sublimest spirit of their number, had imagined it, and that the others had caught it, in its absolute purity and completeness from him ; even then, we maintain, they

never could have set that ideal before us in words—never could have embodied it in a detailed biography, or biographies, such as we now possess. Such an effort were beyond the reach of highest genius, much more of such simple and artless pens as theirs. Let us take as an illustration an instance in point in the literature of our own country. No intelligent person who has read Boswell's Johnson, ever doubted for a moment that the character there depicted is real, or that it is delineated to the life. We feel irresistibly that Boswell never could have conceived a Johnson, had he not known him, and that even had the idea been revealed to him, he never could have made him live before us in everyday words, and deeds, and as in very flesh and blood, as he has done. We are perfectly sure from first to last, that it is the same identical man that moves and speaks before us, and that the idea we get of him is about as true to the life, as any human words can make it. All this, though we knew nothing previously of Johnson himself, or of his biographer, or his book. We are as sure in fact of the reality of the robust and strong sinewed moralist, from a simple reading of the book, as we are of the friend we met on the street an hour ago. How much more would this be the case (if indeed we can speak of degrees at all in a case of absolute certainty), if instead of one we had four Boswells working more or less independently of each other, and varying endlessly in lesser details, yet agreeing absolutely in the idea they give of their one common subject. To doubt in such a case, either as to the fact of his existence, or of his

having been just such a man as he is thus described, would be the very insanity of unbelief. Now such is precisely the actual case before us. In the Gospels we have four biographies exactly of the same nature, as the famous memoirs I have alluded to, portraying their great subject just as they do, not by elaborate description, or philosophic analysis, but by the simple recital of everyday words and deeds; and if it was confessedly impossible for one educated Englishman thus to create and present a robust and strongly-marked human character, how much more for four Galilean peasants, or other obscure romancers assuming their name, to conceive and portray, in a manner worthy of the theme, the character and acts of a God.

In fine, and to sum up all in a single sentence, *the life the Evangelists have portrayed, if real, is beyond all question divine; and it never could have been so portrayed, unless it had been real.*

LECTURE III.

THE WORDS OF CHRIST.

It is necessarily but an imperfect idea of a powerful discourse, which we can gather from a written account of it, however skilfully and truthfully its substance may have been recorded. Even though with infallible exactness every word which fell from the speaker's lips may have been preserved, still there is much of that which imparted its charm and power due to the living speech which has passed away. The flash of the eye, the excited flush of the countenance, the nervous quiver of the hand, the thrilling tones and changeful cadence of the voice, whether falling in gentle whisper or crashing in awful thunder—all, in short, which constitutes the electric fire—the peculiar spell of the great orator as distinguished from the great author—all has vanished like the fire from the spent thunder cloud. Though many may not understand the difference, all at once and instinctively feel it. With the man himself who spoke, the very soul of the words spoken seems to have in great measure departed also. He no longer comes close to us, is no longer in living contact with our soul and spirit, as he was before. In his living presence and

burning words, he speaks to us,—in his mere written sentences he discourses before us. In the one case we are rapt, enchained, carried along,—in the other, we read on in cold blood, and perhaps with difficulty compel ourselves to read through. In short, the words in which our thoughts are expressed are only a part, and often the least part of language. The eye speaks, the hand speaks, the whole living, quivering body speaks as well as the tongue. Thought brightens in the countenance, but only indicates itself by poor dumb signs, in words.

Hence it is that the recorded addresses of celebrated preachers often so greatly disappoint us. The dead relics of their words are as nothing beside the surviving tradition of their fame. They read flat and commonplace—good, sound, instructive indeed—sometimes perhaps, pathetic, impressive, sublime; but still nothing so very wonderful, unapproachable—nothing very different from what we have ourselves heard a hundred times from the lips of comparatively undistinguished men. The reason is, we have been hearing their words, not hearing them. It is not the words of an eloquent man only, but the man himself that is eloquent. It is not his sentences and periods that speak, but his soul, his living, burning self that speaks through them; and through eye and lips and hand and voice all together. Without this it is but the withered leaves, not the flower—the written score, not the music—the colourless outline of the human face divine, without the power, the beauty, and the majesty.

While this, however, is true of all exalted eloquence,

more or less, there is a kind of eloquence, or rather of grand and lofty speech higher than eloquence, of which it is less so. It is that eloquence which lies, not so much in the passionate fervour of the feelings, as in the inherent weight and grandeur of the thoughts. Such words can bear to be read afterwards. Such thoughts do breathe, and such words do burn, even apart from the breathing, burning lips that uttered them. The feelings with which words are spoken pass away, and may scarcely even be suggested by an after perusal of them; but the thought remains, and therefore just in proportion as they are instinct with thought, they endure and are everlasting. Thus the sermons of Whitefield have, in great measure, lost their charm, while the great thoughts of Howe and of Hall, and Leighton and Taylor, not to speak of the Basils and Augustines of a long past age, survive in undiminished power, and are a treasure to all times.

So pre-eminently was it with the words of Christ. "The words that I speak unto you," says He, "they are spirit, and they are life,"—the words themselves, even apart from the look, the voice, the divine and holy presence of Him who uttered them, and who, doubtless, alike in what He said, and in His manner of saying it, spake as never man spake. Still, something of the power even of His words—so far at least as regards their natural influence and impression on men's hearts, must have passed away with the living presence of the peerless speaker, and therefore, in order to attain a full and complete conception of it, we require not only to read

the words, but to learn what impression those words made on the minds of those who first heard them.

And this we are enabled to do from such graphic and pregnant statements as we find appended to some of His most remarkable discourses, as that, for instance, which closes the report of the Sermon on the Mount: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The general purport of the statement we can at once comprehend. The multitudes which then surrounded the august Speaker were arrested and enchained, and profoundly moved by His words. Attracted thither by a variety of motives and considerations—some, perhaps, by mere idle curiosity—they were held captive by a spell to them as new as it was strange. Before, they had been accustomed to yield a listless ear to this or that speaker, and then turn away; but this Speaker took hold of them, and held them fast. It was not that they apprehended, with more or less of intelligence, with more or less of interest, His instructions, but He apprehended them. He got within them, and with irresistible grasp took hold of their heart and soul. So completely was it so, that for the time they probably took no note of the fact. They were so occupied while He spoke, and absorbed with the truths He spoke, that they had no time to think of how He spoke; and it was not until the wondrous discourse was ended, and a long-drawn breath of relief followed the intense silence of rapt and strained attention, that, waking as from a

dream, they began to collect themselves, and to reflect upon the matter. Then it was that they turned one to another, and with hushed breath whispered, "How wonderful is His doctrine! He speaks as one that hath authority, and not as the scribes."

Let us try to ascertain the secret of this power, to which that mixed Jewish multitude thus did homage. We ourselves feel in reading the words of Jesus, especially when we read them in the spirit of prayer and under the eye of the Master, something of the same power; and therefore we are in some degree in circumstances to comprehend its nature, and analyse its elements.

"He spake as one having authority." The first and most obvious idea here is, *the majesty of the tone and manner in which He spoke*. There was a stately port and bearing about the mysterious Teacher, an indescribable air of power and command, which struck His hearers with awe, and at once placed Him at an immeasurable distance from any other instructor they had ever heard before. We see this in some degree in the very form in which His teaching is couched, apart even from the subject-matter of it. His words were kingly in their very stamp and coinage, as well as in the precious material of which they were composed. This of course cannot be as fully perceived by us as by those who were His immediate hearers, and who not only listened to the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth, but were eye-witnesses too of the majesty of Him who spoke them. The look, the air, the tone

of high command and conscious greatness with which He uttered those mighty words,—all this of course is lost to us who hear the divine Shepherd's voice only now by faith, and no longer with eye of flesh see His face; yet there is something in the very form of His language itself, which at least powerfully suggests what we can no longer see. "I say unto you, swear not at all." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord." "Whoso heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock," &c. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him shall I be ashamed." "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee." "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Such language as this is plainly imperial, god-like. He who speaks here is the King of Glory, or He is a deceiver and an impostor. Between these two alternatives there is no middle theory possible. Plainly He is no mere human teacher, however wise and great and good. No human teacher ever assumed a mien, and usurped a tone like this. Either it is the voice of a God, or of one who, by an impious robbery, dares to make himself equal with God. He speaks "as one having authority,"—the authority of One whose every word is truth, whose every command is law. He is the sovereign Lord of the living and the dead—the mighty, awful King, who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, the gates of life and death, time and eternity—or, He is nothing.

Now, observe here the precise force of the argument we are putting. It does not lie simply in the fact

that Christ makes these pretensions, and makes them in so kingly a manner, but that His whole character and bearing is in keeping with them. He not only assumes the sublime position He claims, but He worthily sustains it. Indeed it will ever be found that in the common apprehension of the race, He maintains the merit of a most peculiar modesty, producing no conviction more distinctly than that of His intense lowliness and humility. His worth is seen to be so great, His authority so high, His spirit so celestial, that instead of being offended by His pretensions, we take the impression of one in whom it is even a condescension to breathe our air. I say not that His friends and followers take this impression, it is received as naturally and irresistibly by unbelievers. I do not recollect any sceptic or infidel, who has even thought to accuse Him in this, the weakest and absurdest, if not the strongest and holiest, point of His character.

Then mark in another aspect, the form in which His instructions are conveyed. They are delivered *not speculatively, but authoritatively*. He does not reason, infer, prove, confirm, by elaborate induction and process of argument, but He reveals. He does not, like other sublime spirits, pry wistfully into hidden mysteries, but He draws the veil of the world unseen. There is no effort or straining in His discourses of these awful mysteries, as of one struggling with problems too mighty for him, but He speaks of them with the unconstrained ease and calm assurance of one who has seen them, who is familiar with them, has been all

his life moving in the midst of them, and who is therefore now only speaking of the things which he has seen or heard. There is no irresoluteness, no wavering, no feeble guessing at truth, like those gifted spirits of old, who indeed sometimes "reasoned well" of life and immortality, but yet failed by all their reasonings, even thoroughly to convince and fully satisfy themselves. He did not question like Socrates, or dream like Plato, or laboriously balance probabilities or weigh conjectures like Cicero, but like one who tells of his native country in a land of strangers, He spake that which He did know, and testified that which He had seen.

Connected with this is our third remark, that the teaching of Christ is characteristically *direct, positive, and satisfactory*. He not only raises questions, but answers them; does not merely state and expound the great problems of being, but He resolves them. He goes at once to the heart of those great questions on which the very life of immortal beings turns, and He speaks of them with a clearness and a precision on which there is not a shadow of doubt or darkness. He speaks precisely on those things on which we most need an interpreter from the unseen world to speak to us, and He speaks on them explicitly and plainly. He speaks of the soul, of God, of immortality and responsibility, of sin, of reconciliation, of redemption, of a new birth, of inward healing and rest, of the heart's orphanhood, and the divine, everlasting Fatherhood,—of a kingdom of heaven and a restitution of all things. How infinitely satisfactory is all this! How instantaneously and in-

timately do we feel it, so soon as we take our place at His feet, and come within the shadow of His most sacred presence. How do those utterances of His go home to our very heart of hearts, wake up hope and sublime aspiration there, where all hope and aspiration seemed dead or dying; seem the very answer from the great deep of mercy to the great deep of our misery. In the beautiful words of an eminent writer of our church,* in contrasting the teaching of Christ with that of Solomon: "Next to the man who can answer a question thoroughly, is the man who can ask it clearly. Our world is full of obscure misery,—dark wants and dim desiderata. Like a man in a low fever, its whole head is sick and its whole heart is faint, but it can neither fix exactly on the focus of disease, nor give an intelligent account of its sensations. In this respect Solomon was the mouthpiece of humanity. Speaking for himself, he has so described the symptoms that a whole ward, an entire world of fellow-sufferers, may take him for their spokesman. But this is all he can do. He can state their wants, he cannot meet and satisfy their wants. He is a great querist, but he can shed no light on his own questions. It is Christ's prerogative to do this. One by one, the great Evangelist answers the queries of the great Ecclesiastes. And if the sage has done a service, who in articulate words describes the symptoms of the great disease, how incomparably greater is the service rendered by the Saviour who prescribes the

* The late Dr James Hamilton.

remedy! After all, Solomon is only an eloquent patient; Jesus is the divine Physician."

So, one by one the seals of the great volume, which human wisdom and genius had for ages been struggling to unloose in vain, gave way at once at His touch. In the words of the same writer again, "Solomon with all the rest of the wisest and truest of the race shook his head and told what happiness is not,—Jesus opened His lips, and enunciated what it is. Solomon said, Knowledge is vanity, power is vanity, mirth is vanity, man, and all man's works, are perfect vanity. Jesus said, Humility is blessedness, meekness is blessedness, purity is blessedness; God is blessed for evermore, and most blessed is the creature who is likest God,—Holiness is blessedness. 'We labour and find no rest,' said Solomon. 'Come unto me all ye that labour, and I will give rest,' said the Saviour. 'All is vanity,' sighed the Preacher; 'In the world ye shall have tribulation,—but in me ye shall have peace,' replied the Saviour. 'What is truth?' asks Ecclesiastes; 'I am the truth,' returns the divine Evangelist. Solomon was tall enough to scan the most of earth, and see an expanse of sorrow; the Son of man knew all that is in heaven, and could tell of a Comforter, who can fill with peace unspeakable the soul immersed in outward misery. Solomon could tell that the gate of life is closed against human effort. Jesus has the key of David and opens what Adam shut; and into the Father's propitious presence, He undertakes to usher all who come through Him. Solomon composed earth's epitaph, and over the tomb of the

species wrote, 'All is vanity;' accustomed to date men's history from their death, Jesus substituted, 'All is heaven or hell.'"

These words are as true as they are beautiful, so beautiful indeed, just because they are so true,—and may help us to understand a part, at least, of what is meant when it is said that "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

But there was more still than this. Christ's instructions were not only kingly in their tone, authoritative in their form, positive in their announcements, but *weighty and pregnant in their sense*. There was a depth, a power, a majesty, a self-evidencing light, a soul-searching energy about His words themselves, that seemed to stamp them as divine, and to claim by an inherent and indefeasible title, the homage of those who heard them. They were not only spoken with authority, but they carried in themselves the pledge of their own authority. They were not only uttered in god-like manner, but they were themselves god-like. "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword." Such pre-eminently were the words of Christ, and His hearers felt it. He spoke of weighty subjects, and He spoke of them with weighty words—words that went direct to the heart of the matter, that touched the deepest ground of truth and of the soul's needs. "He spake as never man spake." The wisest instructions of former teachers seemed to those who heard Him but

trifling and vain jangling compared with those majestic utterances that fell with such divine, unconscious ease from His lips. None before had ever so spoken to their hearts—none before so searched and fathomed their deepest wants and longings—none so moved and stirred their inmost hopes and fears. As I remarked before, He came within them, and laid an irresistible grasp on their very soul and conscience. They were not so much listening to Him, as arraigned before Him, held as by a mighty spell before the presence and beneath the very eye of Him before whom all things are naked and open.

Thus, not only did Christ's words command miracles, but they were themselves miracles—bright and supernatural unveilings of eternal truth, even as His deeds of mercy were the forthputtings of the divine power. As a little child once said of the stars, so we may say of them, that they are so many openings pierced in the awful curtain of mystery to let the inaccessible glory shine through. And yet, if thus His words had in them the majesty of God, they had in them no less the gentleness and sympathy of man. They were as utterly human as they were unmistakably divine. At once simple and profound, homely and sublime, plain and practical, yet pregnant and far-reaching, full alike of commanding authority and of persuasive sweetness,—now soft and gentle as a mother's voice, now awful as the crashing thunder,—we are reminded every moment that if He who thus speaketh to us from heaven be the Son of God, He is also the Son of man,—that if He was the eternal Word,

He was at the same time, the Word made flesh, Immanuel, God with us.

I have just one point more to notice, and it follows naturally on what I have just endeavoured to illustrate. As Christ's words were in their substance weighty, so were they *in their results efficacious*. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Such pre-eminently were and are the words of Christ. Not only was there a divine power in them, but a divine power went with them. They were sharp arrows, and they were winged by a mighty, unerring hand. They were not only heavenly food, but divine seed taking root in living souls, and springing up into immortal fruit. They were as Luther said, "not dead words, but living things having hands and feet." There was a soul and spirit in them, a mighty influence for healing, and salvation to every one who received them. They were the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed them—opening blind eyes, turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. So was it in the days of His personal ministry. So is it with His gospel still. Not only now do His words speak, but He Himself speaks in them. In and through them does He still breathe forth His life-giving energy for the quickening of dead souls, in and through them does virtue still go out of Him, for the healing of all who press

near to touch the hem of His garments. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bound, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,—to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." This day is this Scripture fulfilled. Yes, this day, and every day unto the world's end. Still the eyes of the blind are opened, the ears of the deaf are unstopped, the lame man leaps as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sings. Still does He call forth the dead to life, hush the tempest by His word, and send the unclean spirit of darkness howling to his den. A new life breathes over the world wherever He comes, and heavenly flowers blossom, and living waters spring wherever He plants His feet. The wilderness and the solitary place is glad for Him. The deserts rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Thus He speaks "as one that hath authority." All powers and dominions in the spiritual world obey Him. The shadows of darkness flee at His command, and the day-spring of a new creation dawns at the sound of His voice; old sins die, tyrant lusts relax their hold, hard hearts break, cold hearts burn. They that are in their graves hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear it live.

LECTURE IV.

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

THE question of the Gospel History is essentially also the question of the Miracles. That history is in its whole stamp and character so thoroughly miraculous; miracle forms so manifestly the very warp and woof of the entire narration, that it is impossible to accept the one and reject the other. It is based on miracle; it is pervaded, and as it were cemented and held together, by miracle; it culminates in miracle. Miracle, indeed, is its very essence and differentia—that by virtue of which it stands out apart from every other history, and constitutes a mighty and singular factor in the life of the world. Miracle is the very soul and spirit of which the mere human incidents and circumstances are but the fleshly form and vestment, and therefore to eliminate that element is to strike at the life of the whole. To do so is not to render the history more intelligible, but on the contrary utterly incredible and preposterous; inasmuch as you remove that one factor which of itself explains, and which only can explain the whole course of events, and the presence of which makes all the rest natural, consistent, probable. With miracles, or in other words, with the assumption of the supernatural origin of Chris-

tianity, the history of the first three centuries reads straight on, and is throughout luminously intelligible; without it, it is from first to last a medley and an enigma.

To effect this separation the whole strength of recent unbelieving criticism has been perseveringly bent, but in the attempt has utterly and conspicuously failed; and so the state of the question has again returned to the position in which it existed in the days of the old deistical writers. The gospel history, as we possess it, is an organic and indivisible unity, which we must either accept as a whole, or reject as a whole.

The entire weight of evidence, then, which sustains the general credibility of the evangelic accounts, is equally available also to sustain its miraculous facts. The external testimony of the Church and of early writers to the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred books; their internal signature of truth and reality; the illustrative and corroborative light of contemporary history; the patent nature of the facts recorded, and the unquestionable sincerity of the witnesses who sacrificed their all for the truth to which they testified, and sealed by a life-long martyrdom; the very existence of the Church, and the entire course of modern history which the facts recorded in the gospel so luminously explain, but which else remain an enigma; the total absence, in fine, of any countervailing testimony, and the significant silence of adversaries at a time when on the supposition of imposture or credulous delusion, refutation must have been so easy—all constitute together a mass of evidence

for the historical truth of the great facts on which the faith of Christendom rests, and pre-eminently the supernatural part of them, such as cannot be adduced in support of any other series of events in ancient history whatsoever. Nor, indeed, we may safely affirm, would those facts ever have been called in question at all, or been thought to admit of doubt, had there not been other grounds of an *a priori* nature necessitating their rejection, and which no historical evidence of any kind, however abundant, decisive and complete, could possibly neutralise. To this *a priori* ground we are now brought in connection with that great branch of the Christian evidence with which we are at present engaged.

For the question now before us is simply this:—Laying for the moment out of account, the positive evidence of a historical kind for the truth of the miraculous facts recorded in the Gospels, is the nature of those alleged facts themselves such as to hinder or to help belief? Are they essentially and in themselves impossible, or incredible, or the reverse? Is their internal witness, if indeed they carry any such witness at all, for or against the system of which they form an essential and inseparable part? Is Christianity, in short, whether as a historical phenomenon, or as a professedly divine religion, more credible with them, or without them? This is the great problem which we are now called on to consider, and it is manifestly one, not of the historical and external, but of the internal and moral evidence. To the brief consideration of this question, then, we now proceed; and in doing so I shall look at it on the

negative side first; that is to say, consider the arguments which have been adduced by unbelievers to show that miracles are essentially, and *per se*, incredible or impossible.

A full discussion and refutation of this position is obviously in the present connection out of the question. It raises an inquiry far deeper and more fundamental than that immediately before us, and which to be adequately handled must be taken up not incidentally and in its special relation to this subject, but *ex professo* and on its own merits. The refutation, in short, of this objection to miracles is simply, in other words, the refutation of Pantheism on the one hand, and of materialistic Positivism on the other. It may be enough, however, for the present, to point out that the objection in question as urged by the parties now in our view, is simply an assumption, not an argument. The philosophic principle, on which miracles are declared to be impossible, whether derived from the School of Hegel or of Auguste Comte, are postulated, not proved. They are taken for granted as primary principles or axioms to be started from and proceeded on,—the terminus *a quo*, not the terminus *ad quem* of this great debate. They are treated as the results of science proved and established, not as philosophical theories yet under trial. Even Renan, who in words disclaims this *a priori* ground, and professes to treat of miracles simply as a question of evidence, talks of the doctrine of positive and invariable law as a proved conclusion of science from the days of Lucretius downward, and proceeds simply on that ground,

and *brevi manu*, to discard all alleged supernatural events as necessarily legendary. Now we submit that this mode of procedure is manifestly inadmissible. It is nothing less than a vast and unblushing *petitio principii*. The philosophical doctrines in question are theories in debate only, not facts of science,—themselves under trial, not the accepted laws by which all things human and divine are to be tried. More than this,—so far as the trial has gone in the court of human conscience and reason, it has decidedly gone against them. Repudiated alike by the deepest and noblest spirits, and by the spontaneous instincts, and primary intuitions of the race, they are plainly not within, but outside the common law of human thought; bound, therefore, to fight their way into the acceptance of mankind, not to claim it as a prescriptive right. Nor is there even a *prima facie* case in their favour, such as would justify their being assumed in the meanwhile, and proceeded on tentatively as a probable hypothesis. To refer, for instance, specially to Positivism,—the form of infidel speculation now most prevalent and formidable,—*there is nothing in it which can be regarded as certain, but that which is admitted on all sides.*

We pass to the consideration of the other and less venturesome position of modern scepticism, indicated above—viz., the alleged impossibility of proving miracles, even though they might be conceived as in themselves and abstractly considered, possible. This ground is by no means a new one, though it has been revived with fresh confidence of recent years. It is substantially the

position of Hume in the celebrated Essay on Miracles, which held so prominent a place in the arena of apologetic discussion in the days of our fathers. His argument was in substance this :—

“Our experience of the invariableness of nature’s laws is uniform and universal, while our experience of the truth of testimony is inconstant and partial. The expectations founded on the one never deceive us, those founded on the other often do. Wherever these two kinds of evidence contradict or run counter to one another, we are to believe the former in preference to the latter. The one may mislead, the other never can. This is precisely the case of all reported miracles. Testimony, more or less strong, more or less specious and plausible, may sustain them ; all experience—all the knowledge we possess of the fixed and steadfast order of nature is against them, and therefore they must be rejected, as, whether true or not, at least, incapable of rational and sufficient proof. The balance of evidence, alike in nature and in amount, is always and necessarily against them.”

There can be no question as to the eminent ingenuity and *primâ facie* plausibility of this argument : yet its fundamental fallacy may be easily shown. It is, in fact, another notable instance of the most vulgar of all sophisms,—the *petitio principii*. The experience of mankind as to the invariableness of nature’s order is assumed as universal,—while the very question at issue is as to the universality of that experience.

The believer in revelation maintains that while the

operation of the laws of nature is in ordinary circumstances invariable, it has been on various occasions and in extraordinary circumstances interrupted. Both facts, he maintains,—the ordinary uniformity and the extraordinary departure from uniformity,—are alike attested by the experience of the human race. Hume meets this with the assumption, not the proof, that there never has been any such departure. Or, to put it otherwise: in asserting the uninterrupted operation of nature's laws, he only, in other words, asserts that there never have been any miracles, which is just precisely the thing to be proved. We say, Human experience is in favour of miracles; Hume says, All experience is against them. This is, of course, an abundantly legitimate position to take up and sustain by valid evidence; but certainly not to be assumed as a starting-point without proof.

Of course it may be said that in speaking of universal experience, Hume uses the word in a different sense than that in which we have been now employing it; that he refers not to the experience of mankind in all time, but of men in our time,—and that, therefore, he is perfectly entitled to assert that its testimony to the uniformity of nature has been universal and unexcepted. But then, if this is his meaning, we have only to reply that it is nothing to the point; for the thing in question is not the experience of our time, but the experience of all time—not whether there are miracles now, but whether there ever have been any miracles. In short, taking experience in the large sense, then we maintain it is on our side; taking it in the narrow, it is nothing to the

purpose. That the operation of nature's law has been in our day, and within the limits of recent history, unvaried; and that in other times, and for the accomplishment of great and extraordinary ends, it has been interrupted,—these are manifestly not contradictory propositions, and it is idle, therefore, to speak of the testimony that sustains the one as conflicting with the testimony that sustains the other.

Another flaw in Hume's argument very ably handled and refuted by Dr Chalmers, I can only briefly glance at. It turns upon the ambiguity of his language in speaking of the uncertainty of testimony. The real question, as Chalmers luminously shows, is not as to the trustworthiness of testimony generally, but of such testimony as that by which the gospel miracles are proved. All experience, he maintains, is in favour of the invariable truthfulness of testimony, borne by such men, to such facts, and in such circumstances. Testimony, says Hume, as a matter of daily experience often deceives. Some testimony, it is freely granted; but never such testimony as this. To use Dr Chalmers' own words: "Mr Hume's affirmation is that we have never experienced a violation of the laws of nature, but that we have often experienced the falsehood of testimony, and the argument which he grounds on this affirmation is, that it is not in the power of testimony to establish the truth of such a violation; for this would be making the weaker experience prevail over the stronger, that which is unstable and uncertain prevail over that which is constant and immutable. We think that in the argument he falls into the fallacy of

ascribing to testimony in the general, what should only have been ascribed to a certain kind of testimony, and which is in no way ascribable to a certain other sort of it. When he affirms that our experience of the truth of testimony is not so uniform as our experience of the constancy of nature, we would reply, Of what testimony is it, that our own experience in its truth is not so uniform? We allow the assertion in regard to that testimony which bears upon it the mark of imposture. We further allow it of the testimony which, without any glaring marks of imposture, may have the gainly and prepossessing appearance of truth without its reality. But we cannot allow it of all testimony. We affirm that a testimony is conceivable,—nay, that a testimony has often been given, having such marks and characteristics of truth accumulated upon it, and in such circumstances of unlikelihood or moral impossibility of its falsehood, that we can aver with the utmost confidence of such testimony that it never has deceived us, and never will. What Mr Hume charges testimony in the general with, is very often realised in one species of testimony; not so often in a second; less frequently in a third: much seldomer in a fourth; with the exceeding rarity of a thing quite marvellous in a fifth; and *never* in a sixth species of testimony. The subtle error of Mr Hume's sophistry lies in this, that he makes all testimony responsible for all the instances of falsehood, whereas he should make each species responsible only for its own instances." *

* Chalmers' Evidences, Book I., chap. 3.

The argument of Hume is now long since dead, at least in the form in which he presented it, like many another ingenious sophism of bygoneunbelief; but in spirit it still lives, and forms the essential principle of much of the Anti-Christian speculation of our time. Renan's argument on the incredibility of all miraculous histories, in particular, rests fundamentally on the same ground. While in words repudiating all theoretic prepossessions, drawn from the doctrines of any particular philosophy, and not even denying the abstract possibility of proving a miracle, he denies that any such event ever has been proved, or can be proved, by any of the methods which historical investigation supplies. He indicates a method by which they might conceivably be established, if true, but that method is totally beyond the sphere of ordinary historical proof. He offers us a crucial test by which the matter might be at once and for ever settled, and the conflict of ages thus terminated; but that test is of such a kind that it never can be applied. Thus miracles are, according to him, provable by a certain conceivable test, but unprovable by any actual or possible test. Let us here use his own words :—"No miracle has ever been performed before an assembly of men capable of verifying the miraculous character of a fact. Neither common people nor people of the world are capable of doing this. It requires great precaution and a long habit of scientific research. Have we not, for example, in our time, seen society become the dupe of coarse pretences to puerile illusions? Miraculous facts, so-called, attested by whole villages, have disappeared before a more rigorous inquiry,

as utterly worthless. And if it be thus proved that no contemporary miracles bear discussion, is it not likely that the miracles of the past, which were all performed in the presence of mere popular witnesses, would be found equally illusive, if they could be subjected to the same careful scrutiny? . . . Were a worker of miracles to present himself in these days, with pretensions sufficiently serious to be discussed, and announce himself, we shall suppose, as capable of raising the dead, what should we do? We should appoint a commission composed of physiologists, physicians, chemists, and persons trained in historical criticism. This commission would choose a dead body, would assure themselves that it really was dead, would select a room for the experiment, and arrange an entire system of precautions necessary to place the result beyond doubt. If under such conditions, the raising of the dead was effected, a probability, nearly equal to certainty, would be obtained. However, as an experiment must be always capable of repetition,—as those who have once done a thing must be able to do it again, and as there can be no question of easy or difficult in regard to miracles,—the miracle-worker would be invited to reproduce the miraculous fact in other circumstances, and upon other dead bodies in another company. If on each occasion the miracle succeeded, two things would be proved: *first*, That supernatural facts happen in the world: and *secondly*, That the power of producing them belongs to, or is delegated to, certain persons. But who does not see that no miracle ever has been performed under these conditions, that the miracle-worker hitherto ever

has himself chosen the subject of experiment, and the company or witnesses before whom the act was to be done; more frequently, perhaps, that it is the people themselves—obeying an invincible impulse to recognise something divine in all great events and great men,—who have created after the event the miraculous legend or story. Historical criticism, therefore, compels us to maintain it as a principle that recitals of miraculous events are, *per se*, inadmissible; that they always involve credulity or imposture, and must consequently be sifted and explained, to see how much of truth, how much of error, lies in them.”

I forbear to remark on the somewhat loose-jointed logic of this ingenious piece of plausible special pleading,—*e.g.*, “No contemporary miracles bear discussion;” therefore, “It is likely that the miracles of the past, if subjected to the same scrutiny, would be found equally illusive;” therefore, on the whole, “Historical criticism compels us to maintain it as a principle, that recitals of miraculous events are *per se* inadmissible.” Or, more shortly thus: Present pretended miracles are illusions; therefore, all past alleged miracles were, likely, illusions; therefore, all accounts of such are, certainly, untrue. M. Renan talks of the scientific conditions of experimental investigation; he should remember that there are scientific conditions also of fair and conclusive reasoning,—conditions which his own style of argumentation very imperfectly meets. Nor is this a mere logical quibble or piece of dialectic sword-fence. The inconsequence in reasoning we have pointed out enters most vitally into

the very heart of the question in debate. There is quite an abyss between the "*likely*" in the second member of the sorites and the "*certainly*" of the third. It is a stupendous leap, and a leap to the very conclusion which he ought to have reached by sure and legitimate steps, without any leap at all. Granted that the illusive character of modern miracles did create a likelihood that all past miracles might on investigation prove so too; this would only call for increased caution in examining the proof by which they should be sustained, not for summary rejection, without investigation. That is to say, it would bring us precisely to our ground, not Renan's; in other words, to the fair and candid consideration of the question on historical grounds,—Whether in point of fact those events, granting them to be antecedently unlikely, actually took place, or no? In short, his own premises clearly demand a conclusion, in favour of the cautious and sifting examination of the evidence, not of the instant dismissal of the cause without evidence.

But leaving this, we at once join issue with him on his main and decisive plea. "If," he in effect says, "miracles could be subjected to the ordinary processes of scientific experiment and investigation, then they might be proved, but they never have been so tried"—(he might safely have added, they never can be)—"therefore, they are essentially unprovable." I say, they never can be so tried; for in appealing the question to the arbitrament of a scientific investigation, conducted by a commission of *savans*, I presume he does not mean seriously to suggest that any supernatural acts of God, supposing them real, ever could

in the nature of things be submitted to such a test. That God incarnate, in His mysterious sojourn and majestic goings on the earth, should court the decision of such a tribunal, should submit His pretensions like a common juggler or Thaumaturgus to their arbitrament, should repeat and re-repeat His experiment for their satisfaction; that any true manifestation and working of the living God ever could have been thus tested and proved, is surely an idea too preposterous to be entertained. To offer us such a trial, therefore, is obviously to refuse us any trial at all. In appealing the cause from the arena of historical evidence to that of scientific experiment, he summons us to a court where we cannot in the nature of things appear. But why should we be called to such a trial? Why should a scientific investigation in such a case be necessary? If scientific facts and laws may be certainly established by scientific trial, why may not historical facts be equally established by historical trial? Is it maintained that the Almighty God could not, even though He would, make His own supernatural presence and working known to His creatures, except through the investigation of a commission of *savans*? Surely if the Eternal Word made flesh really dwelt among us, He could manifest forth His glory in such a way that all that had eyes might behold it, and be sure of it, even as of the sun in the firmament. Even so we maintain it to have been,—even so the whole history of the first three hundred years seems to postulate that it must have been. For, observe, the miracles of Christ were not of a kind of which experienced *savans*, and *savans* only, could judge.

If true at all, they were such as must have been equally patent to all. The feeding of the hungry multitude, the hushing of the raging sea, the raising of the buried dead, the healing of crowds of blind, halt, withered, by a touch, —these were works of God palpable to all eyes, and which the learned and the simple, the philosopher and the clown, could judge of and appraise alike. Surely if such things as these were done, those who saw them might be as sure of them as of their own very existence, and might transmit by a testimony, steadfast unto death, the sure knowledge and belief of them, to the generation which succeeded their own.

LECTURE V.

THE ADAPTATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE WANTS OF MEN.

WE may consider the Christian religion, either as it is in itself, or in its relation to the nature and the wants of man,—its own intrinsic excellence, or its adaptation to the purpose for which it is professedly given. Does it, on the one hand, worthily declare and manifest the glory of God; and on the other, does it adequately and effectually meet the great and immemorial desiderata of man? In both respects we should expect, on the supposition that it is true, to find in it the clear signature of its divine original. We should expect to find it at once godlike as a revelation, and efficacious as a religion,—radiant on its very face with celestial glory, and in its inner nature and workings instinct with an unearthly and truly divine life and power. Now, that both these anticipations are fulfilled in the gospel of Jesus Christ,—as Christian apologists we confidently maintain. We believe and are sure, both that the glory of God shines in the face of Christ, and that that glory, whenever it is truly beheld, has in it an irresistible power to change the beholder into the same image,—from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The first proposition we have already considered, and

I trust established when speaking of Christ Himself,—His character, His teaching, His miracles, considered as so many ways in which His divine personality reveals itself, and manifests forth its glory. We are now in the present lecture to invite your attention to the other.

An objection, however, has been raised *in limine* to the whole line of argument I am now about to pursue. The mere correspondence between the religion of Jesus, and the deepest feelings and wants of man, is, it is maintained, in itself no proof whatever of the divine nature of that religion, but rather, on the contrary, of a natural and spontaneous human origin. The correspondence in question may be only the result of these very feelings and wants to which it is an adaptation—the articulate expression, as it were, of these inward cravings which seem bound up with the very essence of man's being, and which make him everywhere and always, in some form or other, a religious being. Man, it is said, will ever believe what he himself wishes to believe; what he feels to be needful for him he will instinctively assume and cling to as true; and so his religion, whatever its form, and whatever the degree of its comparative purity and excellence, is ever, essentially, but the reflected image of himself,—alike in his greatness and his misery, his aspirations and his fears. Conscious of the brevity of life, and shrinking from the termination of an existence so dear to him, he dreams of a hereafter; oppressed with the miseries of life, and with the struggles of a combat too hard for him, he imagines to himself all manner of divine deliverers and saviours,

mighty to wrestle with the giant forms of evil, and to stretch forth to weaker combatants a helping hand; the fears of guilt give birth to propitiatory sacrifices; the perplexities of doubt to oracular responses, visions, apocalypses, inspired seers, and incarnations of divine power; and hence, in all their endless forms and names, the religions of the world—from the lowest to the highest, from the foulest to the purest, from the most degraded fetish-worship, to the sublime religion of Jesus. Such is substantially the prevailing sceptical philosophy of religion,—the *rationale* of the great question before us usually given by men who are not wholly insensible to the moral excellence and spiritual power of Christianity, but yet refuse to accept it as a divine religion. All religions alike, and Christianity among the number, are the birth of human consciousness, and as such serve as an index of the comparative purity and elevation, which that consciousness has attained amongst the people and in the age in which they take their rise. As expressions thus of a true, and, in a sense, divine instinct, they possess a certain validity and stamp of truth, but in this sense only. Of such expressions of that which is inmost and most divine in man, the religion of Christ may be admitted to be, in point of fact, the highest and purest,—but still this only, and nothing more.

I have endeavoured in this sketch to put the objection under consideration, and the philosophical theory on which it rests, in the clearest and strongest light possible, and that for two reasons:—First, because the question here raised is vital and fundamental, and there is no use

in such a case to evade or disguise the force of an argument, which it becomes us on every account fairly to face and to meet: and Secondly, because there is a certain amount of truth at the basis of the objection itself, and of truth, too, most important in its bearings on the great question before us, which a fair consideration of our adversaries' argument will enable us the better to recognise. For it is true, that man is by nature a religious being; that he does instinctively and inevitably create a creed and a worship for himself; that he does dream of a retribution and a hereafter, and bethinks himself of sacrifices, and propitiatory rites and prayers; that he does feel after some God unknown, and some unknown way of friendly converse with him, if haply such may be found; that, in fine, he is not self-sufficing, but dependent, and so driven by the very necessity of his being, to look above himself and beyond himself, as to a rock, higher and stronger than he.

That all this is true, and that it is the main source, too, of all the various forms of religious belief and worship that have existed in the world, all at least but one, does not admit of question, and is not indeed seriously questioned on either side of this great debate. The only real question is, does it explain all that the disciples of unbelief profess to explain by it? Allowing that it accounts for the origin of every other religion, does it account for the existence of the one only religion now in question? Will the same key which unlocks the mystery alike of eastern and of western Paganism, equally unlock the mystery of the Cross? We maintain that it does not. It quite

explains, we admit, why man should have a religion, but not why he should have such a religion as this. A human religion will be ever essentially human. The birth of his own heart, it will inevitably bear more or less the likeness of its parent. Man can never rise far above his own level, and though it may be admitted that his ideal, and especially that of the more gifted and lofty spirits of the race, will always be somewhat above anything he has ever realised in fact, yet still it will be essentially of the same character. It will not be specifically different, but only a larger and brighter form of that which is. It may scale the loftiest heights of the human, it will never reach to the divine. It will adumbrate the great want of the human spirit, but will not satisfy it. In it man hears only the echo of his own voice, not the answer, or aught that bears the semblance of the answer of a God.

Observe what it is precisely that we here affirm of Christianity. It is not merely that it bears witness to the spiritual wants of man, but that it meets and satisfies them. Other religions bear witness more or less fully, more or less impressively, to the same wants, but do not satisfy them. Herein lies the pre-eminence, and the distinct authentic signature, of the religion of God.

The one-half of the statements we have now made will be admitted without question on all hands. The testimony of all experience will be accepted as decisive of the fact that the religions of nature have not fulfilled their purpose—have not answered the end for which the soul of man craves after and fashions for

itself, a religion. They have neither satisfied its longings, nor healed its wounds. Instead of effectually ministering to the mind diseased, they have only soothed and pampered the deep malady, and thereby, in the end, only irritated and inflamed it the more. They have imparted to him neither peace, nor strength, nor purity. They have not broken the soul's heavy chain; they have not given it strength to rise. It is even a question whether they have contributed much to raise it above that utter baseness and degradation, to which the blank negation of all religions must have doomed it. For myself, I cannot but believe that in this respect they must have contributed something. It is but reasonable to conclude, that the belief almost in any form of a higher world, and a higher ideal than that which here we see, that even glimpses and shadows of the divine, however dim and broken and distorted, must have communicated something of higher aspiration to the spirit of man, and helped to make it less ignoble and utterly base than it would otherwise have been. But to such beneficial influence, whatever it may have been, there were great countervailing drawbacks. If polytheism tended, in some respects, to make man better, it tended in other respects to make him worse. If it enshrined some of the highest virtues of his nature, it consecrated also his foulest crimes. If justice and heroic courage were deified, so equally were lust and blood. Aphrodité and Mars had their worshippers, as numerous and as devoted as Apollo, or Athene Minerva; nor were the rites of the one at all incompatible with those of the other.

Purity, chastity, humility, godlike mercy, and self-sacrificing love, had no place either in their Pantheon or their Olympus,—nor was there aught in their whole mythology even to suggest such thoughts as these, which have been the source of all that is purest and best in the life of the world: “Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are the peace-makers; blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Confessedly, then, all the religions of the world, except Christianity, are failures. Suggested by man’s felt needs, and instinctive religious longings, they yet utterly fail to meet his case. Is it otherwise with Christianity? Does it stand forth in this respect as a thing apart, and specifically different from all the rest? Do the desires of all nations which had only found expression more or less articulate elsewhere, find satisfaction here? Is it fitted, in short, at once to heal the disease of our nature, and unfold its highest life?

Let us briefly examine this question. Let us interrogate the soul itself, which is here our only available witness, as to her experience in this matter, and let us see whether she be in very deed, as Tertullian calls her, *naturaliter Christiana* or no,—Christian in all that is truest, deepest, and most divine within her, and in the testimony which she gives to that divine remedial system which alone can meet her case.

Christ, in the Gospel of St John, speaks of the religious instinct of the human soul as a “Hunger,” and the provision He makes for its satisfaction as “Bread.” The first part of this doctrine at least is true.

The soul does thus hunger. It has its own peculiar wants distinct from those of the body, and of the mere common and earthly life, and it is advertised of those wants, and urged to seek their supply by an inward appetency and craving, which seems bound up with the very essence of its being. Man liveth not by bread alone. Immortal food alone can fill and satisfy the immortal mind. All men feel this more or less. The deep heart everywhere cries, "Who will show us any good?" and by that cry, blind as it often is, it very plainly means something very different from the mere animal instinct of "what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" It is not merely that the soul should hunger for a food other than that of the body. It does hunger after it. What it is indeed it hungers for, or where it is to be found, it knows not well; yet still it hungers, and it must have that it hungers for, or continue unsatisfied and craving still. This hunger and this need of soul food is not a discovery of revelation, but it is a fact of humanity, borne witness to by the experience of all hearts, and by the history of all time. The gospel did not create this hunger, it only professes to satisfy it. It found souls famishing for bread, and it offered them bread. It makes them indeed more conscious of their spiritual necessities, interprets their nature and meaning, and stimulates them to seek the only true supply,—even as the hunger of the body, too, is sometimes whetted, and rendered more vehement by the sight, or even by the thought of food; but the hunger itself and the wants which it implies,

existed none the less before. It is true, indeed, that before the advent of Christ, and especially in lands unvisited by prophetic vision, the souls of men were, as it were, asleep; and even yet, they slumber on until the day-spring of a supernatural illumination come to awaken them,—but they hunger even in their sleep, and have strange, dim dreams of the needed bread. Hence those propitiatory rites and sacrifices of which we have already spoken, oracular voices, tales of heroes and demi-gods, visions of Elysian fields, and Tartarean fires. Thus it would seem that when God made the soul, He ordained the food on which it should live, and stamped upon it at the same time such a nature that it should ever hunger for that food, and never be able to find satisfaction and rest in anything else. All the parts of our nature share in this hunger,—the mind, the conscience, the heart, the will, the immortal hopes and fears,—that is to say, they all in one way or other point to something beyond this world—crave after a portion, and a stay, higher and better than aught that is seen and temporal, as their true centre of rest.

The mind thus hungers,—hungers after truth—longs to get to the reality and heart of things—to solve the enigma of existence—to know the real meaning and end of life, and the awful secret that lies in the bosom of death, to pierce the veil of mere shadow and make-believe, and to grasp the truth, as it is, concerning God, the universe, and myself. That there is such a hunger as this, and that there always has been, it is surely not needful to prove. What is all philosophy, or

the search after wisdom and the secret of the chief good, but just the impressive witness to the fact? And what, too, alas, is the failure of that philosophy, and the utter darkness and uncertainty in which it issued, but the witness to that other fact, that while the mind hungers after truth, it cannot of itself find the bread it hungers for, but must receive it, if it ever comes at all, from above? It can only knock, earnestly and long, at the gate of this highest knowledge. Another hand, from behind, must open it.

Then, *the conscience* hungers,—hungers for the sense of righteousness and peace with God. I do not enter here on any question of speculative philosophy, concerning the nature of conscience, and the origin of our moral judgments. I proceed on the plain facts and phenomena of the case as they are patent to all. It is clear beyond all question that the conscience of man, wherever in any degree awake and susceptible, longs to feel itself right with a power higher than itself, and yet is at the same time conscious that it is not right. It cannot shake off the idea of responsibility—of amenableness to an unseen law of right, whose behests it knows it has not fulfilled, and whose retributive penalty it fears. Fear dogs the heels of guilt; unseen furies pursue the transgressor; and even the innocent, as judged by a mere earthly standard, feel at times that there is something in their relations to heaven that is wrong. They are afraid of that which is high. There is a shadowy hand on the wall—the echo of a dread footfall behind—a rustling of leaves amid the trees of the garden—the

haunting dread of a judge, and of an inquisition yet to come, now slumbering, and now again awaking with awful vividness, that will not let the spirit rest; and then it cries out in its pain, "How shall man be just with God?" and hungers, oh how vehemently and agonizingly often, for the solution of the great mystery! Orestes, at the shrine of expiation, where alone he found at last escape from the avenging furies, and his own sleepless crime, is but a symbol of the universal instinct and great immemorial desideratum of the race.

Then, *the heart* hungers too, hungers for affection, for sympathy, for an infinite love, an infinite sympathy, for one transcendent object whom it may love supremely, and trust entirely; some strong arm to lean on, some faithful heart to confide in, when every mortal arm shall fail, and every mortal heart grow cold or cease to beat,—or at least show its essential shallowness and incapacity to love and to feel, as you feel you need to be loved and felt for. Yes, there are times when we all of us feel our need of this, or at least will feel it,—times when the world seems to us very lonely, when it is wintry chill, and the heart shivers and shrinks into itself. There are none that can understand us, that can perfectly enter into our feelings and sympathise with us; and so in the darkest crises of our life, we are compelled to leave all behind, and to walk, like our divine Lord in the wine-press of His agony, alone. And then, in very deed, does the heart hunger for a friend, a friend transcendent, a friend that shall stick closer than a brother, a friend with a deeper heart and entirer and more inward

sympathies than any ever known on earth, who when we pass through the waters, however deep or dark or lonely, shall be with us, and abide with us to the last.

“Be near me, when my life is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of being slow.

“Be near me, when the sensuous frame
Is racked with pangs that conquer trust
And time, a maniac scattering dust
And life, a fiery stinging flame.

“Be near me, when my faith is dry,
And men, the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting, and sing,
And weave their pretty cells and die.

“Be near me, when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low last verge of life,
The twilight of eternal day.”

Do not these words speak to the hearts of us all? Is it not this, in very deed, that men hunger for, and would they not cry from their very inmost depths if they only knew of such an one, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee?”

And if the heart thus hungers for a Friend, *the will* no less truly and deeply craves a Master. Wayward as it is, and impatient of all wise guidance and control, it yet feels the need of guidance and control. It craves for a master—an authority—a higher support, and firmer guiding-rein, than its own. The created will is not self-sufficing. It is a child's will, not a father's will. It was made to obey, not rule, to follow, not to lead; and it feels this and can never be perfectly at

rest and sure of itself till it is in this, its right place. So it is feeble, fluctuating, irresolute, inconsistent, restless, when divorced from God, its true Lord and King. Yes! deeply as we have forgotten Him, and far as we have wandered, there is at least this much of the child's heart remaining in us, that we ever shrink from walking wholly alone, with nothing higher than ourselves to lean on, and then only are we perfectly brave and strong and happy, when we are sustained by the strong arm, and swayed by the strong will and law, of our Father in Heaven.

Then, finally, *there is a hunger in which all the parts of our nature share together*,—in which mind, conscience, heart, will have each their part, and as with one voice cry out together for a bread the world cannot give. It is the hunger after immortality. Man who lives, hungers to live for ever. While the divinity stirs within us, and intimates eternity to man, the soul with all the strength of its being claims that heritage, and hungers after it. It recoils from the thought of annihilation and nothingness. It shrinks back upon itself, and startles at destruction. It does not love death; never can be reconciled to it, but hates it; abhors it; flees scared and terror-stricken from the sight of it. It is determined to live for ever, and refuses to believe, spite of all appearances and specious reasonings to the contrary, that it ever can die finally. It sees, indeed, the grave before it, it cannot shut its eyes to that, but it refuses to stop there, persists in looking beyond. Hope, even human hope, pierces the veil on

which the eye of sense gazes in vain. Though reason staggers and fails, the heart still clings to its immortal birthright, and, if it cannot see, yet dreams of a hereafter. Still it thinks of friends departed, not as lost, but only gone before, and of itself not as finally cut off from them, but following, not to a land of darkness, but of light and life. Hence those dreams of happy elves, and Elysian fields, and breezy hunting-grounds, and spacious halls of everlasting feasting, which fill the poetry of heathen lands, and, whatever else they may mean, show at least the direction in which the heart ever tends. Hence, too, those gentle expressions, in which even heathen tongues could speak, of that which to the eye of sense, at least, is the "be all, and the end all" here, "*e vita excedere, migrare, quasi et hospitio discedere.*" So indestructible is this immortal instinct within us, so inextinguishable this hunger; insomuch that if it ever die, methinks, it must be by no natural decay, but by a very strangling and crushing out of the soul's life itself.

Have I stated the case fairly? Have I not read the *testimonium animæ* aright, and is it not, so far as it goes, *naturaliter Christiana*,—witnessing at least to the reality of the desideratum, which Christianity professes to supply? Does it not hunger even in its natural unregenerate state, and apart from, and antecedent to those deeper and holier hungerings, which the Spirit of grace awakens, and to which alone the sure promise of satisfaction belongs—the hungering after God, the living God? Surely Augustine was right,

when speaking of himself even in the days of his darkness, he said, "*Fecisti nos ad Te; et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in Te.*" Surely He who can meet this hunger and satisfy it, who can do that which all the philosophies and religions of the world had failed to do, is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God,—is indeed the true Bread that came down from heaven that men might eat thereof, and not die.

Now, it is precisely this that the Gospel does. It is the grand final answer to the question of ages—the all-sufficient provision of God for the infinite desideratum of man. Those great, fundamental, universal, and everlasting wants of the human spirit, are just those which it professes to meet. It meets the soul's hunger in all its forms and manifestations, and offers it at last that full and absolute satisfaction which it had sought everywhere else, but never found. To the mind, the conscience, the heart, the will, the immortal hopes and fears alike, it is at once the life-giving food and the sovereign medicine and balm. *To the mind it offers truth*,—the clear manifestation and the absolute certitude of truth, yea, the Spirit of Truth himself,—to guide it into all truth, and seal it in divine assurance, and holy sweetness to the heart. *To the conscience it offers atonement*, expiation, propitiation, reveals a divine Substitute and Sin-bearer, yea, lifts off, as by a mighty unseen hand, the burden of its guiltiness, and bears it away out of sight into a land not inhabited. *To the heart it offers a Friend*,—a friend in whom it finds at once its highest ideal, and who yet immeasurably transcends it, a friend at once

human and divine—divine in knowledge and in power and infinite depth of love, human in tenderness and sympathy, and gentle grace and truth,—an everlasting, ever-loving, never-changing friend,—“a friend that loveth at all times, and a brother born for adversity.” *To the will it offers a Master*,—a mighty, a wise, a strong, a righteous, and rightful master, the true sovereign Lord of the spirit, whose allegiance is truest dignity, whose service is perfect freedom, giving us, in the very act of taking up the light burden and the easy yoke, an ineffable sense of rest and peace we never knew before. And, finally, *to the dying man it opens the gate of life*, solves by a word the mighty secret, rends the awful veil, rolls the great stone away, yea, kindles up within the soul the very light of immortality, as those words of majesty fall upon our ears, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

Thus in every way Christianity is the divine provision for the infinite wants of man; and Christ is in very deed the desire of all hearts, as well as of all nations,—though, alas! they know it not.

But does the gospel fulfil all that it promises? In form adapted to the case and wants of man, is it at the same time in power and efficacy adequate to meet them? This is in great measure a question of experience, and to that we must make our appeal. Thus alone can we distinguish food from poison, the true nutritive substance from that which seems to be, but is not bread. The

body's true food is that which satisfies the body's hunger, and sustains the body's life,—the soul's food is that which satisfies and sustains the soul. Thus the Prophet of old appealed to this discriminating test of the true and the false, "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" And to the same criterion our Lord fearlessly appeals, "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger,"—and again, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst," &c. We see here plainly enough what He engages to do. He promises to meet and satisfy the deepest longings and thirstings of the heart, so to satisfy them that we shall feel and know that they are satisfied, and never need to thirst or hunger more for anything, other than we have already found; but only for itself alone, in larger, and in larger measure. He promises to give us rest—rest in the fullest, deepest sense; divine, absolute, everlasting rest,—from the agitations of doubt—from the stings of conscience—from the weariness of the lonely, homeless heart—from the aimless restlessness of the unfixed will, from the chill dread and horror of the last enemy;—the sense, in short, of having found at last that which I was made for, and have all along been blindly feeling after, and beyond which there is nothing truly good to be sought for or desired.

Now is it indeed so? Can Christ fulfil this promise, and does He do so? Surely this is a question that may be answered, which any man, at least by due

search and inquiry, may ascertain for himself. We have abundant materials, at least, for the solution of it. After Christianity, or in other words, Christ, has been eighteen hundred years in the world, dispensing to all hungry and seeking souls the bread of which He here speaks, it may be certainly known whether it be indeed satisfying and soul-sustaining bread, or no,—whether it indeed so fills and satiates the souls that partake of it, that they cease to crave after any other, and in the new light and life and strength and hope which it imparts, feel that they have found the key of life's mystery, the everlasting balm and medicine of the soul's wounds! Is it then indeed so? Is there such a thing as this on the earth? or is it all an imagination and a dream? Is there, or is there not, in actual human experience, such a thing as the second birth, as the new creation, as the peace of God, as the spring of life within the breast, as the effectual cleansing of the conscience, and breaking of sin's chains through the power of the cross, as the swallowing up of death in victory? Is there such a thing as so finding the pearl of great price, as with joy thereof to sell all that we have and buy it, so tasting the sweetness of salvation, as that all other sweetness shall in the comparison lose its charm? In a word, have men ever found rest to their souls by sitting at Jesus' feet,—been enabled to live glorious lives, and die victorious deaths by simply believing and following Him?

I do not ask if there have been any false Christians, any who have had the name and the profession thus to live, but were dead; but have there then been any

true, any to whom Christ has been all that He promised to be, and more than they had ever dreamed; and who, by the mighty change He wrought in them, and by the divine and blessed life He taught them to live, might be known even by enemies and strangers to have been with Him? That is the issue on which this question turns, and on this issue even by itself, we are willing to peril the whole case of Christianity. If the gospel be divine, its power will be divine, its working divine, its influence and its fruits divine, so that candid inquirers may be effectually answered now, even as the disciples were of old, in such words as these: "Go and tell the things which ye have seen and heard, how the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the poor have the gospel preached to them,—and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

LECTURE VI.

ADAPTATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE LIFE OF MAN.

IN my last lecture I called your attention to the argument for the truth of Christianity, which results from its adaptation to the wants and deepest instincts of man, both as a creature and a sinner. In doing so, however, we confined ourselves mainly to one great aspect of the subject. We fixed our view rather on the passive than on the active side of human nature, on its wants and woes rather than on its living energies, and were thus led to speak of Christianity in its healing, rather than in its quickening power, as a divine balm for the soul's wounds, rather than as the spring of its highest and holiest life. Even as thus partially considered, we found in it abundant evidence of the divine source from which it springs, and of the divine power which still follows it, and works in it. It satisfies the soul's hunger, medicates the soul's wounds, calms the soul's fears and deep unrest, as no other doctrine or discipline ever did or can, and thus vindicates itself as the very voice of One who could feed famishing thousands by His word, and say to the troubled waters, "Peace, be still," and there was a great calm. But its divine power and

self-evidencing truth does not end here. It is as efficacious, as a discipline of life, as it is, as a remedy for the poison of death. While it quells the soul's hunger, it stimulates its energies and renews its strength. While it gives rest to the weary bondsman, it at the same time lays upon him a lightsome burden and an easy yoke, and calls him to a new and blessed life, in which duty passes into privilege, and service is glorified by love. Translated from the kingdom of darkness, he passes at once into a new world, where other influences play around him, and other instincts stir within his breast, and all, alike within and around him, behind and before, are to him so changed that it seems to him that till now he had never lived at all. It will be my endeavour in the present lecture to make this statement good,—to show that Christianity, while meeting and satisfying the deepest cravings, is equally efficacious in awakening and moulding the highest and divinest life of man.

The great primary forces of the Christian life, as laid down by the greatest of the apostles, and borne witness to by the whole Scriptures, are these three,—Faith, Hope, Love. “And now abideth,” says he, contrasting those elements of our present existence, which are merely provisional and transitory with those which are essential and everlasting, “now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” Observe, these all “abide.” Not love only, as some have gathered from a too cursory reading of the words, but all three. In other respects, different from one another, even as

one star differeth from another star in glory,—in this respect they are alike. They are all abiding; they are all everlasting. They belong not to earth only, but to heaven; not to time only, but to eternity. For the contrast drawn by the apostle is not between the abiding nature of one of these graces, and the transitory nature of the others, but between the abiding nature of them all, and the transitory nature of certain other things, which he had spoken of in the context. “Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; or whether there be tongues, they shall cease; or whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” Those excellent gifts shall pass away, when they have fully served their end, and prepared the way for something more perfect, and therefore more enduring than themselves. They belong not so much to the essential life of the soul, as only to a particular period or stage of its spiritual progress, and we shall cease to possess them, just because we shall leave them behind, and advance onward to something higher and better. We shall leave them as the winged insect leaves its chrysalis shroud, as the mature man leaves the alphabets and spelling-books and grammars of his childish days,—not because he undervalues or despises them, but because he has fully realised the use of them, and needs them no more. “For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see as

in a glass, darkly, but then face to face ; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity ; these three, but the greatest of these is charity."

Such is the apostle's Philosophy of religion, and of the Christian life,—and the whole teaching of the Scriptures elsewhere is in harmony with it. Everywhere do we see these cardinal principles so thoroughly entering into the very heart of Christianity as a practical system, that they may be said not so much to belong to it, as to constitute its very essence. They do not make the Christian life only,—they are the Christian life. From first to last, alike in its primary germ and its ultimate consummation and crown, that life is a life of faith, a life of hope, a life of love. We live by faith, we wait in hope, we labour and rest in love. The first supplies strength, the second incitement, the third constraining and ennobling motives ; and so the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope, are at once the seal of our election here, and the measure of our preparation for that higher and brighter sphere to which we are taught to aspire. Let us endeavour, then, more fully to develop this view, and point out its significancy, alike in itself, and in its relation to the wants and nature of man. In doing so, we shall find, if I mistake not, as in our former discussion, that the true Theology is also the best Psychology.

I. And first, as to Faith. "Now abideth *faith*."—"The just shall live by faith."—"By faith we stand."

“Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into that grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God ; and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed.”—“We walk by faith, not by sight.”—“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”—“If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this rock or this mountain, be removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it should be done.”

Such is the consentient testimony of Scripture as to the primary place and sovereign virtue of this divine principle, as one of the grand factors of the new life. Is that teaching justified by fact ? Is it in harmony with the constitution of human nature on the one hand, and with the experience and history of human life on the other ? Is the spirit of man of such a make and mould as that he shall find his highest and noblest life in faith, and is the gospel of such power and efficacy as to enable him to live such a life ?

To answer these questions, we must ask another,—What is faith ? And to this we reply, in accordance with the whole teaching of Scripture, it is trust,—the leaning of the soul on something beyond itself. In its general sense, it is a leaning on something,—in its religious, in

its Christian sense, it is a leaning on God! It is the spirit of man lifting up itself to take hold of one higher and stronger than himself. As such, surely it has its root in the very constitution of our nature as created beings, and in our essential relation to the infinite and uncreated. Man was made to trust. He is by the very law of his being, dependent. He is not self-sufficing, and he knows that he is not. He never was made to stand alone, and he trembles to stand alone. If there be one primary instinct that lies deep down at the very core of our being, it is this sense of weakness, limitedness, of the necessity of holding by something, leaning back upon something that is higher and stronger than we. So much is this the case that some of the profoundest thinkers on the philosophy of natural religion, have traced to this innate sense of dependence our very first ideas of God, and of a higher world. Thus, as by an irresistible law of our being, we are ever looking above ourselves, and beyond ourselves, groping on every side for some sure stay and centre of repose. We are strong, brave, resolute, just in proportion as we feel, or dream, that there is a power behind us, seen or unseen, created or uncreated, on which, in the hour of need, we may fall back, and fix the anchor of our heart. We find no such one among our fellow-creatures. There may be, indeed, some higher than ourselves, and stronger,—as parents and teachers,—and in these, accordingly, we at first entirely trust, and they are to us even as God. But gradually we outgrow this confidence, this first religion of our infancy. Step by step we find out the

narrowness, the limitedness, the hollowness of these dear earthly stays. They are higher and stronger than we, perhaps; still, but only a little higher and stronger,—perhaps even in some respects lower and weaker; at least they are not strong enough to sustain the weight of those interests a man would fain repose in them,—the entireness of that trust he feels he must one day repose in some one, or sink altogether. The dread powers of sin and sorrow with which he has now to combat, and which are too strong for him, are too strong for them also. That wisdom which once he thought unerring, and that strength which once he deemed boundless, stand equally with himself paralysed and helpless, in presence of the dread powers and awful mysteries of life. Frail, sinful, dying, he cannot conceal from himself that they are frail, sinful, dying, too. So he feels that he needs a rock higher than they, and a deep voice speaks within his heart re-echoing the words of the holy oracle without, “Trust not in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no stay.” So he stretches out his hand, not only beyond himself, but beyond all creatures, beyond all finite stays whatever, and feels after the divine and the everlasting.

What does all this mean, this dim groping in the darkness, this blind feeling after God, or anything which the heart can fashion for itself, and which shall be to it as a God? What, surely, but this, that the heart was made for faith, and can find its true life only in faith. That blind instinct, indeed, of which we have spoken, is not itself faith. It only indicates the capacity for faith—the soul’s felt need of a

centre of repose which it has not yet found. It is not faith, but rather the conscious absence of faith, and of that on which faith may lean, the woful cry of a lost child for that father whom he has forsaken, and almost forgotten, but without whom, just because he is a child, he cannot live. It marks the place within the soul where faith should be, from which the lost link between the finite and the infinite has been torn away.

Now, Christianity restores that link, it reawakens faith within the breast by revealing and bringing nigh the true object of faith. In it, the heart that longs to trust finds one, transcendent alike in power and in love, in whom it may trust absolutely and wholly. In it, the frail tendrils of the soul that were made to cling, and because they have nothing else to cling to, cling to the ground, and creep on the ground, find at last a worthy and sure support around which they may throw their arms, and mount upward, sustained by its strength and quickened by its life. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."—"At my first answer all men forsook me; nevertheless, the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and shall preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom."—"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This then is faith, divine faith: the true anchor

of the soul, sure and steadfast, alike amid the storms of this present life, and amid the heavings of that dark river that rolls between it and another. This is the victory which overcometh the world—yea, all the powers and principalities of evil, here and hereafter,—even this faith!

II. If Faith has its foundation in nature, so also has Hope. “Now abideth *hope*.”—Equally with faith, it strikes its roots down into the deepest ground of man’s primary and indestructible constitution. As the soul naturally and instinctively looks around it, and above it, or rather let us say beneath it, and behind it, for some unseen support surer than itself,—so as naturally and instinctively does it look before, toward a goal and point of satisfaction and repose such as it has not yet found. By the very necessity of our being we live in the future—forget the things that are behind, reach forth unto the things that are before. A living fountain of bright expectation springs up evermore within the heart, and sparkles in the light of the rising sun. Evermore there is a hand beckoning us, and bright visions luring us on and on. The light even of this world’s sun shines not on the objects that lie immediately at our feet, but on the crests of the delectable hills that seem to rise up before us in the far distance. The path we tread is hard and dry and dusty, like a burning desert track,—but on the horizon far away there gleams a glorious sea of joy, a deceitful mirage, indeed, a mere illusion of the fancy so far as this world

is concerned,—but still enough to fill and fire the fainting traveller, and impel him to press forward still.

It is good for us that it should be so. It is the very mainspring and primary condition of all progress. We advance beyond the present and rise above it, just because we are dissatisfied with it, and cannot acquiesce in it as a final state. A state of absolute contentment and sufficiency were a state also of stagnation: it is the sense of something wanting—of some good thing in the future yet to be attained, that stimulates to high endeavour and prompts to noblest deeds. And so, as we never in this life fully attain, nor are yet perfect, this spring of progress continues with us to the last. As we start on the race of life, so do we close it, hoping still. It is so alike, though in different ways, with old and young. When we are young we look forward to our own future; when we are old to the future of our children,—but still equally look forward. Even the natural life thus is, in some sense, a pilgrim's progress, though the pilgrim, alas! has lost his way, and knows not of the true rest and goal. It was not as a saint only, but as a man, that Joseph, when he took farewell to time, looked forward still to the future of his race,—when he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones. And so, all our lifelong, yea, through all the lifetime of the race, hope remains our companion and our counsellor. Amid our homes of sin and sorrow, toil and care, that angel-form glides day by day, cheering the mourner, lifting up the fallen from the ground, nerving to fresh courage the despairing heart, and singing

pleasant songs in the ears of those who had hung their own harps on the willows, as they deemed for ever.

Yet what a deceiver is this hope, at least as men know it here, in its mere human, earthly form! How inevitably do its promises fail, its dreams dissolve and vanish! We travel on and on, but we find not that we were seeking after. We wander amid broken cisterns and faded flowers. We advance not toward the sun, but from it, and the glory of life's morning fades away into the light of common day, and then anon dies into darkness. The memories of the past become more and more sad, and cast a sadder and still sadder shadow over the present and the future. Affections blighted, longings unfulfilled, confidence betrayed, early hopes deceived or long deferred, friends, kindred, endeared companions of former days, dead or changed, trusted hearts found hollow, and distrusted and injured ones too late found true,—old wells of blessing dried up, and new wells of Marah opened, that never run dry,—these, and it may be, sorrows darker still—a guilty conscience, a blighted heart, a wounded spirit, a wasted, degraded life—and all terminating at last in that great, great darkness towards which the stream of life is ever rushing and never returns,—such is life; the life of all men, and of every man, more or less, the be-all and the end-all here,—the fruitless fruit of all our cares, toils, struggles, tears, and yearnings of the heart,—were there nothing to be hoped for beyond,—no good time to come when this mortal strife is ended, and the load of flesh dissolves.

Now it is here again that Christianity meets us, and

proves itself once more that divine religion whose author knew what was in man, and could speak to the heart of man as none other ever did or can. It is pre-eminently the religion of hope, the religion of the future, and of the great coming age. It both kindles hope to the loftiest ardour, and sets before it the highest and worthiest aim. It interprets the dim anticipations of nature, gives voice and utterance to them, purifies and exalts them, and promises them a fulfilment such as she had never dreamed,—an object of aspiration and pursuit, high, holy, sublime, and irresistibly constraining, such as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor thought in its utmost stretch had conceived, but which, when once revealed, commends itself to his very heart of hearts, as its true portion and prize.

This, doubtless, is one main source of the power of Christianity. It is this which has imparted to it its irresistible charm, alike for sorrowing and for aspiring hearts in every age. All through the long and weary night of the ages, has the bright vision of the city of God gleamed before their eyes, inspiring lofty purposes, and nerving to heroic deeds. The good time coming, the true, the everlasting golden age, the calm after the storm, the spring after the dreary winter, the day-breaking after the long chill dark night, the solving of all doubts, the clearing of all mysteries, the consummation of all hopes, the crown and reward of all righteous deeds and sacrifices, the great final harvest after the long sowing of prayers and toils and tears,—all this, of which poets have sung, and weary struggling hearts have dreamed in every age, but which He alone who is Lord of the ages could

reveal—it is this which has imparted a new grandeur and reality to life, and shed a glory unknown before over the hour of dissolution. Nor does it impart inspiration only, but sanctity also. While it fires us, it raises us. The presence of a lofty hope makes the thoughts also, and the life sublime. The holy fire it kindles within us purifies while it burns: and thus proves that both the hope itself, and He who is the author and the substance of it, are divine.

III. If man was made to believe and to hope, so surely, and perhaps more than either, was he made to love. “Now abideth *love*.”—As the soul needs a support, and the life needs an aim and spring, so does the heart require an object. The heart, as we had occasion to remark in our last lecture, hungers for love—craves and demands an object of supreme affection and complacency—some one transcendent being whom it may single out from every other, to whom it may assign its highest throne, and at whose feet it may lay its richest, choicest treasures. All men love—all men, more or less—some object or other, whether worthy of that high affection or no; and so strong and absorbing is this passion, that when first we taste its sweetness and prove its power, we are ready to confess that we never fully knew what it was to live, till we had learned to love. Yes! love, even human love, is a blessed thing; even in its disappointment, in its bereavement, in its desolate and lonely anguish, it is blessed. The poet touches a chord in every breast when he says—“ ’Tis better to have loved and lost, than never

to have loved at all." Even the bruised and smitten heart,—he to whom all life has been changed, and the whole world become a solitude because one beloved form has passed from it for ever—would refuse to be healed of his wound on the condition of being bereft for evermore, alike of the sweetness and the bitterness of loving. Even the memory and departing fragrance of one true and sacred affection is more sweet and precious to the heart, than the present possession of all other joys whatsoever. Nor sweet and blessed only: it is salutary as it is sweet. How it elevates, softens, refines, the heart in which it dwells—transfigures the whole character, and gives a new purpose and meaning to life! How often has the entrance of one pure and chaste affection into a hitherto diseased nature exorcised a whole legion of devils, and made it the home of pure and gentle and generous virtues unknown before! And all this, though the object itself beloved, may be quite unworthy of the exalted sentiment with which it is regarded—may owe its grace and beauty far less to anything in itself than to the eye that beholds it—may, indeed, in point of fact, as time runs on, become to the same eye poor and commonplace, when the glory which fancy lent it has died away. We first love, and then we idealise and glorify the object of our love, and then this ideal and glorified form takes possession of our hearts instead of the poor earthly counterpart, and still more elevates and purifies the affection which created it. The love ennobles the object, and the object again ennobles the love, and so the process goes in a blessed course of action and

reaction until, perchance, some rude shock of stern, inexorable fate, to which love itself cannot close its eye, breaks the spell, and throws us back on the cold, naked, and ignoble real again. But who shall say what the power alike, and the sacred, purifying influence of the principle must be, when the most exalted love finds an object indeed worthy of it; one who shall not only fulfil its loftiest ideal, but rise immeasurably above it; one in whom the most naked real, and the most glorious ideal, are the same—one, therefore, whom the more we know the more we shall love, because we shall ever feel that we never can love Him as He deserves. Now, such an object Christianity reveals. Christ,—as He lived on earth, as He lives still on the breathing canvas of the Gospels, is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, the living embodiment of all that is noblest and best for which heart ever yearned, or which fancy ever dreamed. Radiant alike with divine glory and most endearing human excellences—the brightness of the Father's glory, and the fairest flower of earthly beauty—precious alike for what He is in Himself, and for what He has done and borne,—He claims for Himself a place in all true hearts, such as belongs to none other. Nor does He make that claim in vain. Not only does He deserve to be thus loved, but He is thus loved by thousands. He lives and reigns in countless hearts, the object of an affection, deeper, purer, mightier than any which nature knows—and undying, too, even as He is Himself.

“The love of Christ constraineth us.” These words

are fulfilling themselves at this hour, as they have fulfilled themselves in every day and hour since the gospel of the kingdom began. This is the true life-power of Christianity—the mightiest life-power, in truth, in all the world. The sacred fire of an unearthly love, kindled at Pentecost, burns on still on the earth, and at once by its exalted intensity, and by its purifying and transforming and new-creating might, proves itself divine. The grand hyperbole of the Preacher is translated into fact; it is a pure flame which “many waters cannot quench,” which is “strong as death,” and which has proved its indomitable might in a thousand martyrdoms. Nor does this supreme and most sacred affection stand alone; love to man, and all gentle thoughts and charities, follow in the train of love to God and to His Christ. Those in whose hearts the love of Jesus reigns, ever delight also to walk in His steps, going about doing good, and soothing and healing all human griefs and wounds, even as He did before. The great central and all-controlling affection gives birth to a whole crowd of other lesser affections, which go forth with it to gladden and bless the world. Divine charity is also, in the best sense, and in the most practical way, human charity too. And thus, from the day of the ascension till now, not confessors and martyrs only, but sisters of mercy, heroes of philanthropy, have been the crown and glory of Christianity, and its grand distinction from all other religions ever known on earth.

Thus in every way has Christianity proved itself, and

every day anew proves itself the great life-power of humanity—at once rousing all that is purest and best within it to its highest pitch, and carrying it by an energy truly divine, beyond itself—creating at once an all-conquering faith, an all-inspiring hope, and an all-transforming love, and proving that the apostle gave expression at once to the truest reason and the highest faith, when he uttered those grand words: “Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.”

LECTURE VII.

THE DIVINE BOOK—ITS AUTHORSHIP.

IT must be admitted at the outset, that the Bible is a book entirely unique and singular in the literature of the world. It is like itself, and like none other. Alike amongst ordinary human writings, and amongst writings distinctively religious, and so in a sense divine, it stands apart and alone. The very manner of its production, even on a *primâ facie* view, presents a phenomenon altogether unparalleled. It is at once one and many, a library and yet a book, the collected production of many authors, writing with diverse aims, and amid diverse influences and circumstances, yet forming together a single, absolute, organic whole. Composed of no fewer than sixty-six separate fragments, by forty different authors of the most diverse education, culture, bent of mind and position in life; by legislators, judges, poets, priests, prophets, kings, evangelists, apostles; in Jerusalem, in Babylon, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome; in Hebrew, in Chaldee, and in Greek; during the long course of fifteen centuries, from the grey dawn of history to the very highest noon of Greek and Roman civilization;—in outward style and form, too, the most various; history, biography, didactic discourse, sententious apothegm, lyrical psalm, idyllic song, tragic drama, prophetic rapture, elaborate

argument, and free familiar letter:—yet when all its multifarious and apparently heterogeneous parts have been put together, or rather, as by a mysterious affinity and silent process of organic life, have grown together, the whole stands out in a distinct individuality, a perfect and indivisible unity, even as though it had been, in the ordinary human sense, the production of one mind, and of one hand. One spirit pervades it; one thought fills it; one message and grand design runs through it. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles,—the Old Testament and the New,—seem as absolutely to belong to and fit into each other, as integral parts of a common whole, as the books of the Iliad, or the chapters of the *Novum Organon*.

If there is any apparent exception to this, it arises from a characteristic which only reveals in another way the organic unity of the book itself, and of the divine dispensation which it records. Its teaching is not only complete but progressive. As through the ages, so through its mysterious page, an increasing purpose runs, and becomes clearer and clearer as we advance. It proceeds from the simplest lessons to the highest truths; from the milk of babes to the strong meat of full and manly age. In short, it was not made, but grew,—not cut and rounded into a formal completeness like a dead crystal, but rising up like a palm from the root to the highest frond, or a stately pile from its deep foundations to its sublime heaven-pointing spires. Thus, while recording in its vivid annals the gradual divine education of the world, it furnishes at the same

time the materials for the similar gradual education of each individual soul, which is, indeed, itself a little world like the great world without, and must pass in its spiritual growth through the same essential steps and stages. Thus the teaching of Abraham and the teaching of Paul are different, and yet parts of the same—complementary though not identical; neither in itself complete, but each contributing to the completeness of the whole, of which each equally forms a part,—even as the simplest axiom and the highest calculus are each essential portions of the one sublime science, by which the mountains are weighed in scales, and the distances of the stars are measured.

So remarkable, indeed, is this mystery of Holy Scripture, notwithstanding those circumstances of composition which might seem to render any such unity impossible, that, possessed by the intimate and irresistible sense of it, we are continually apt to overlook or underrate the rich variety which it nevertheless presents. The unique grandeur and sanctity of the one book makes us forget the special traits and characteristics of the several books; the common and transcendent individuality that belongs to all, puts out of sight the particular and lesser individuality that belongs to each. The human is lost in the divine—the many voices of the messengers, varying endlessly in tone and compass, in the one commanding voice that speaks through them all. Thus, in doing justice to the supremacy, we are in danger of losing somewhat of the riches of Scripture. To use the felicitous words of another, “Theology has

not yet turned to sufficient account the Bible's marvellous diversity. We know how opposite are the turns, and how various are the temperaments, of different people, and how unequal are their capacities. One has a logician's intellect, and delights in a dialectic subtlety. Another has a prompt intuition, and deprecates every ingenious or protracted argument. Some have the ideal faculty so strong, that they never understand a proposition rightly till it sparkles as a sentiment; poet-wise their eyes are ever aloft; they cannot descry matters of fact and homely truths, which creep or walk along the ground; but, in order to arrest a vision so sublime as theirs, thoughts must spread the wings of metaphor, and soar into the zenith: whilst others are so prosaic, that they are offended at all imagery, and grudge the time it takes to translate a trope or figure. Some minds are concrete and cannot understand a general statement, till they see a particular example; others are so abstract that an illustration is an interruption, and an example a waste of time. Most men love history, and nearly all men live much in the future. Some minds are pensive, some are cheerful, some are ardent, and some are singularly phlegmatic; and, had an angel penned the Bible, even though he could have condescended to the capacity of the lowliest reader, he could not have foreseen the turn, and fitted the taste of every child of Adam. And had a mortal penman been employed, however versatile his talent, however many-sided his mind, he could not have made himself all things to his brethren, nor produced styles enough to

mirror the mental features of all mankind. In His wisdom and goodness, the Most High has judged better for our world, and, using the agency of forty authors, transfusing, through the peculiar tastes and temperaments of so many individuals, the self-same truths, the Spirit of God has secured for the Bible universal adaptation. For the pensive there is the dirge of Jeremiah, and the cloud-shadowed drama of Job. For the sanguine and hopeful, there sounds the blithe voice, and there beats the warm pulse of old Galilean Peter. And for the calm, the contemplative, the peacefully loving, there spreads like a molten melody or an abysmal joy, the page—sunny, ecstatic, boundless—of John the divine. The most homely may find the matter of fact, the unvarnished wisdom and plain sense, which is the chosen aliment of their sturdy understandings, in James's blunt reasonings; and the most heroic can ask no higher standard, no loftier feats, no consecration more intense, no spirituality more ethereal, than they will find in the Pauline epistles. Those who love the sparkling aphorism or the sagacious paradox, are provided with food convenient in the Proverbs, while, for those whose poetic fancy craves a banquet more sublime, there are the dew of Hermon, and Bozrah's red wine, the tender freshness of pastoral hymns, and the purple tumult of triumphal psalms."

The truth of this must be obvious to every one, and it only requires to be thus vividly and felicitously expressed, to be recognised in its true importance as one of the grand characteristic features of the divine word. It is one of

the chief of those varied adaptations to the nature and the wants of man, which betray the manifold wisdom of God, which presided over its production. In speaking to man, it was needful that the divine Revealer should speak in the language of men—that He should speak to many men in many languages—so that each one might hear in his own tongue—in that style and form of speech which he understands the best, and which comes most directly home to his heart, the manifold wisdom of God. Thus the divine message comes to us, not through a human voice only, but a voice specially familiar and grateful to us, and enriched, too, with the tones of some special experience, some special discipline of suffering and sorrow answering to our own.

But this diversity of the sacred writings, in itself at once so conspicuous and so admirable, only renders the common element, the mysterious principle of unity that combines them all, the more remarkable, and the more irresistibly suggestive of a more than human source. That unity itself is wonderful, taken in connection with the whole circumstances of the case now described; and it becomes still more so, when we consider the nature of that unity—in other words, the special characteristics common to all these writings, which part them off, and distinguish them from all others. These characteristics, perhaps, have never been better defined than in these words of our Confession, which seem almost to stake the whole question of a divine revelation on this evidence alone: “The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God by their majesty and purity, the

consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God, and by their light, and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation." Or we might express it otherwise by assigning to the Word, in the same way as to the Church, certain distinctive notes or differentia which might be denominated thus,—sanctity, purity, majesty, catholicity, vitality, efficacy.

(1.) *Sanctity*. That this is, speaking generally, and apart from special difficulties and apparent exceptions, the marked characteristic of these writings, will scarcely be denied. Every one, who gives himself earnestly to the study of them, and yields up his mind to their spirit and influence, feels this. We instinctively feel that we are treading holy ground; that we are breathing a diviner atmosphere, walking amid a richer, serener light than that of earth. We have entered into a sanctuary, ascended a sacred mount. An aroma that breathes not of earth but of heaven, perfumes every page of these wondrous writings,—and of other writings, just in proportion as their authors have come under their influence, and caught the infection of their spirit. Whatever may be said of particular passages, this, at least, is, beyond all question, their general purport and character. God here is all in all,—He is the central Sun of this higher and holier world into which they introduce us; and every object and relation there is seen in the light that streams from His face. Amid all the lesser, and it may be dissonant sounds, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will toward men" is the key-note that sounds

through them all, and which irresistibly arrests and fills the listening ear.

(2.) *Purity*. This also will in the main be granted. It will not, cannot be denied, that the Bible as a whole, and in its pervading spirit and tendency, is pure, and the source of purity. The common conscience of mankind countersigns the testimony of the Psalmist: "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."—"The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Nay, is it not demonstrable, is it not notorious, that whatever of purity, in any true and higher sense, there is in this world, is almost wholly due to this source? Heart purity, family purity, social purity, virgin chastity, matronly honour; where would these things have been at this hour, where would the very idea and shadows of them have been, but for those words of purity which came forth from Jerusalem, but for those holy waters which, eighteen hundred years ago, went forth from the sanctuary, and mingled with the great sea of the world? And where at any time do those fair flowers blossom in their full grace and beauty, save within the precincts of this holy ground, and beneath the dews that distil from those sacred skies? What voice but that ever awakes within the sinful heart the cry, "Create in me a clean heart," or urges it with inextinguishable longing in life and death to seek it? Who shall tell even, how far some of those who reject the divine authority of the

Bible, may owe their purest impulses and noblest aspirations to the secondary influence of sacred words, the remembrance of which still haunts them, while their inspiration is denied?

(3.) *The majesty of the style* in which the sacred writers discourse, together with those other attributes of form and diction, which together with it make up the distinctively Biblical language, has been often remarked, and can indeed scarcely fail to strike any moderately susceptible reader. Amid all the lesser diversities which characterise the individual writers, we still feel that there is a common stamp and coinage of thought and language characteristic of them all. As there is a Platonic style, and a Shaksperian style, and a Miltonic style, and a Johnsonian style, the rhythm and ring of which any cultured ear can at once distinguish, so there is just as distinctly a Biblical style. We all insensibly come to know it, become familiar with it, learn at once to recognise it when it falls upon our ears. Not only do we distinguish its very words, but other words as like them, and cast in the same mould. Like any other style it is difficult to describe; but we shall not at least greatly err if we say, that there is in it a simple grace, a limpid freshness, a sententious force and memorableness, a pregnant depth, a *vis vivida*, a grave and sacred majesty all its own, and which emphasizes it, and sets it apart from every other. Of chaste beauty and strength it has ever been regarded as a model, and has contributed at once to refine and to enrich every literature with which it has blended, and whose standard of taste it has

helped to form. Even the well of English undefiled would not have run so pure but for the English Bible. Of all quotable books, it is, perhaps, the most quotable, spangled all over with starry texts, which arrest the eye of every devout and reverent reader, shoot into the darkness of the soul, and shine within the heart for ever. It is also the most translatable,—easily passing from language to language, with scarcely any abatement of its original force and beauty, insomuch that unlearned and even some learned readers unconsciously come to feel, as if it was not the dead Greek and Hebrew, but the living, vernacular Bible that is inspired. In fine, its language is the language of the people—of all men and every man alike—of the gentle and the simple, of the learned and the unlearned, of the sage and the child alike; for it is the language, not of conventional form or of abstract thought, but of the soul and of the heart.

(4.) Closely connected with this last attribute of the Biblical style, is *the catholicity of its message*. As the language of the Bible is the language of man, so is the religion of the Bible the religion of man—of man as man—of man everywhere and always—of all that is truest, deepest, and most universal in his nature. It is the true cosmopolitan and æcumenical faith,—admitting of easy transplantation to any soil or clime—equally at home in any century of human history, and in any country in which human beings are found. We have referred to this consideration already, in speaking of the genius of Christianity itself, and of the framework and constitution of that divine society in which its spirit dwells.

Meanwhile it is enough to note the fact, as a thing most remarkable, and inevitably suggestive of a higher than human inspiration, that a book, proceeding from the hands of a few obscure and despised Jews, should be at this hour by pre-eminence the book of books for all men, and for all lands,—the inmost bosom friend of the truest, purest, noblest hearts of every kindred and of every clime.

(5.) We take our two last notes together, *the vitality and efficacy of the divine words*,—their power of germinating and taking root in human souls, and of yielding the blessed fruits of a new and better life, wherever it thus grows. Here again I am tempted to quote the language of another; “Before the days of printing,” says Dr James Hamilton, “the copyists sometimes took great pains with their manuscripts, and Bibles were then elaborately embellished. Traced in silver and gold and brilliant colours—occasionally executed on tinted parchment, the mere letters were often a gorgeous picture; and such illuminated manuscripts will always awaken the astonishment and delight of the tasteful antiquarian. We do not print our Bibles in silver and in gold; nor have we verses marked out from the others by their vermilion ink, or their bolder character. And yet we have sometimes thought that every careful reader can illuminate his own copy as he proceeds. The book is all bright with passages, which at one time or another have stirred or strengthened him; it is all radiant with texts which have assured, or rebuked, or consoled him. On this verse he heard a sermon which he never can forget; this

chapter is associated with some affecting event in his domestic history; and here is a paragraph which gave rise to a dialogue or meditation ever memorable in his religious career.

“Such is the divine variety of scripture, that from the stores of religious biography might be compiled a sort of historical commentary, showing what service in the way of ‘doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness,’ the different passages have done. It would be found that in this quiver there are hundreds of arrows, which have pierced the conscience, and convinced of sin. It would be found that from this tree of life, as many leaves have dropped, and proved effectual to the healing of such wounds. It would be found that in this garden there hardly grows an herb, but some visitor has been regaled by its beauty, or revived by its fragrance: and those which have not been sweet to the taste, have, in their very bitterness, yielded a salutary tonic. How many a text should we find invested with its true and touching legend. This was the lamp which lighted that pilgrim through that ominous eclipse; and this was the hidden manna which in the howling wilderness restored his soul. Here is the smooth stone with which he struck down that terrible temptation, and here is the good sword with which he struck off his head. Here is the harp on which he discoursed sweet music, when God gave him songs in the night; and here is the staff with which he was comforted, when he walked through the valley.”

It is, then, by considerations like these, which appeal to the experience of every one, that we are enabled to

trace the imprint of heaven on the pages of the sacred word, and thus derive another evidence of the divine origin of that religion of which it is the articulate expression and authentic transcript. Here the question of revelation and the question of inspiration are coincident, and the discussion of the one leads us straight into the heart of the other.

LECTURE VIII.

THE DIVINE BOOK—ITS INSPIRATION.

THE idea of Inspiration seems bound up indissolubly with the fact of the Incarnation. We cannot believe the one without in some form or other accepting the other. If the Son of God is indeed come in the flesh for the redemption of man, He is come not for one age only, but for every age; not for the salvation of a people, or of a generation, but for the salvation of the world. The advent must have been not a mere visit to earth, but a new creating epoch,—the entrance of a new course and order of things,—the inauguration and commencement of a continual and enduring presence. If He was ever in the earth, He must be still in the earth—in it, in living power and efficacy, even as in outward and palpable manifestation of old. In other words, in closing His earthly ministry by an august and triumphant return to the skies, He must have made some effectual provision for the continuance in all after times, and the eventual completion of the work which He had begun; for the ingathering of the harvest of which He had sown the seeds; for the rearing of the living temple of which He had laid the foundation-stone. It would be scarcely possible to believe on any evidence, the stupendous miracle of the Incarnation, otherwise. Had all things

continued as they were in the course of history and of human life ever after; were no new and enduring factors seen to be at work for the regeneration of the race; were there nothing actual and tangible in the real world we live in, to show that He, who eighteen hundred years ago passed out of sight, is indeed ascended on high, and is wielding that mysterious power in heaven and earth which His disciples ascribe to Him, we could scarcely help regarding the whole as an unsubstantial, however bright and glorious, dream. If the life of Christ, in short, is real, it must also be perpetual; what we read of in the Gospels must only be the beginning of what may be seen now, and shall be seen to the end of time.

There are two ways in which, in harmony with the general course of the divine procedure in the adaptation of means to ends, we may conceive this to be done. It might either be by a living representative, or by a written oracle, or by both together. The great Teacher and wonder-worker, though unseen, might yet speak and work on earth, either through the voice and hand of another, or by an authentic and enduring record of His own words and deeds,—by a Vicegerent or by a Book,—Himself, the while, by His ever-present Spirit, dwelling in the one, and speaking through the other. Now, that one of these conditions actually exists in matter of fact, can scarcely admit of a question. Christ does live in His Church. The mystical body does truly, however imperfectly, represent the living head. His personal ministry and labours of mercy and love are continued in the ministry and labours of one who is now, even as He

was before, in the world. There is, and ever since the ascension there has been, an actual living society in which the Spirit dwells, and His divine, unearthly life is perpetuated, and more or less palpably manifested on the earth,—truly and even marvellously, spite of manifold imperfections and shortcomings, reflecting His image and doing His work,—bearing in her whole mind and idea of her life a deep stamp and impress which never could have been hers, had not He lived and borne it in transcendent measure before her. The glory that shone in the face of Jesus Christ still lingers on the countenance of His members, in whom He still lives, still suffers, still toils and prays, still goes about doing good, still lifts up His hands to bless the world.

Thus the one condition is fulfilled. Is the other fulfilled also? We have an enduring witness and teacher of the faith. Have we also an enduring rule of faith? The one manifestly were incomplete and inadequate without the other. If the Church is to teach the world, who or what is to teach the Church? By what means is the authentic knowledge of His will, the true and faithful image of His life, to be perpetuated in her? By what enduring die is the impress of God to be ever anew stamped upon her soul, and the sacred lineaments to be preserved in unfading freshness and authentic truthfulness from age to age? If she is to shine through all the darkness of the world, till the great sun again shall rise, whence is she to derive her light? One of two things at least seems to be very clear; if she is to fulfil at all her heaven-given function, or even perman-

ently to exist on the earth, either she must have in her hand an inspired rule of truth,—or she must be herself inspired. She must get the sure knowledge of the faith direct from heaven, or learn it from some heaven-provided oracle. Grant the truth of the Incarnation, or, in other words, the fact of a divine, supernatural revelation at all, and assuming that it cannot be the will of God that that Incarnation should fail of its end, that revelation die away and perish from the world, there follows as a direct and almost inevitable conclusion, either an infallible Bible or an infallible Church.

The special nature of the revelation itself strongly confirms this conclusion. It was characteristically and pervasively miraculous. The Incarnation was itself a miracle, and all that followed after it, and sprung out of it, was a continual succession of miracles. It began with a miraculous birth, and closed with a miraculous ascension, and the whole path between was illuminated with the glory of a divine, miraculous life. Christ's own teaching was accredited by miracle, and so was that of His disciples. As they spake in the name of God, so they bore with them the visible and miraculous attestation of the authority of God, He "Himself bearing witness to them, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will." Did the miraculous then stop here? If it accredited the messengers, did it fail also to give and to guide the message? Did God indeed miraculously set His seal on these men as His appointed ambassadors and spokesmen to their own age, and to every age, and

did He take no effectual means to secure that the words they spoke, and delivered down to the end of time, should be His words, and not, as otherwise in large measure they must be, their own.

But is the Bible, in point of fact, such a book? Have we any good reason to believe that it is in any true and proper sense Christ's book, even as the "Dialogues" are Plato's, and the "*Novum Organon*" Bacon's? We have already seen that there is a very strong presumption indeed, in favour of the existence of such a book, but the ultimate decision must manifestly depend not on presumption, or *à priori* considerations of any kind, but on the direct and proper evidence applicable to the case.

In one point of view the question of inspiration runs up essentially into the general question of revelation. The traces of a more than human origin in the intrinsic character of the sacred books constitute a part, and a most essential part, of the evidence of Christianity as a divine, supernatural economy; they are also as obviously and directly an evidence of inspiration. To prove, in the sense in which the Christian apologist maintains it, that the Bible is a divine book, is necessarily also to prove that it is an inspired book. The two propositions indeed are identical; for the very thing we mean when we say that the Holy Scriptures are inspired, is simply this, that they are the product of a special and supernatural intervention of God,—that they are from heaven, and not of men. In this point of view accordingly, the question has already received full discussion in our last Lecture. I proceed now to remark,

I. "Scripture" claims to be inspired. It does so in many ways:—

(1.) By an appeal to the promise of God; of Jehovah, to the prophets of old—of Christ, to His apostles. "Behold I have put my words in thy mouth," saith the one (Jer. i. 9). "He shall guide you into all truth," saith the other (John xvi. 13).

(2.) By explicit statement of the doctrine. "All scriptures is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii. 16). "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1. 20).

(3.) By habitual recognition, as

(a) In formula of reference; "As the Holy Ghost saith" (Heb. iii. 7). "The Holy Ghost this signifying" (Heb. ix. 8). "As he spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began" (Luke i. 70).

(b) In argumentative citation; as "How then doth David in Spirit call Him Lord?" "If David" (in the Spirit) "calls Him Lord, how is He then his son?" (Mat. xxii. 43-45.)

(c) In explicit assertion. "Thus saith the Lord." "The word of the Lord came unto me saying." "For I neither received it (the gospel) of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus."

Of this, then, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt. There is the tone and language of Scripture throughout, in speaking of itself. It distinctly claims inspiration—claims to speak in God's name, God's words.

II. Then, secondly, its character justifies the claim attested by miracles from without; with signs and won-

ders and gifts of the Holy Ghost accompanying the words and deeds of its authors, it itself shines with a pure, celestial lustre, as of the shekinah of old, that is scarcely less miraculous.

By its majesty and purity, by its power and sanctity, by its spiritual depth and prophetic insight, by the sacred grace and germinant force of its language, and the lofty grandeur of its thoughts; by its wondrous unity in the midst of endless variety and manifoldness, by its catholic breadth and cosmopolitan adaptation to all men and to all times, by its exhaustless meanings and divine quickening energy; above all, by its light and power, with the mysterious influence which has ever accompanied it, to convince the conscience, to renovate the heart, and to transform and glorify the life; by all, in short, that has made it in all ages, and in all lands, the best of books alike for high and low, for rich and poor, for learned and unlearned, the exponent at once of their truest, deepest nature, and the awakener and sustainer of their highest, holiest life, the comfort of the sorrowful, the friend of the poor, the balm of the penitent, the light of the perplexed, the quickening breath of saints, heroes, martyrs, the guiding clue of life, the hope of the dying;—by these and other such signs have we seen it stand forth before us radiant in the light of heaven, and bearing as on its forehead the very seal and signature of God. We shall not, therefore, recur to this argument. We shall assume and proceed upon the fact of inspiration as already proved, and devote our remaining time to some remarks on its proper definition and import.

There are three several senses in which the word "*Inspiration*" may be taken, and in point of fact has been taken, with relation to this subject, and which it is of the utmost importance clearly to distinguish.

1. There is the *Inspiration of genius* ; the inspiration of a Plato, a Bacon, or a Shakspeare,—the sublime intuitions of truth, and visions of glory and beauty, that are given to the loftiest minds in their loftiest moods; the workings of nature in her highest sphere, but still of nature and of nature only. It is obvious that this has nothing in common with the special inspiration, which we have claimed for the Holy Scriptures, the very end of which is not to vivify and clarify the truths of nature, but to reveal truths above nature—to shed a clear and unerring light on a path on which all earthly guidance fails. "He shall teach you all things," says Christ, speaking of that inspiration which He was to give to His disciples, "and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have spoken unto you." "He shall guide you into all truth," the truth, that is, concerning salvation, and the world unseen. To such a work as this manifestly the mere inspiration of genius has no relation whatever. Then,

2. There is the *Inspiration of moral goodness*, or of ordinary spiritual influence,—in other words, the illuminating and sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost, bestowed in larger or lesser measure on all believers to lead them in the way of truth, and create them anew unto good works; the *inspiratio caritatis* spoken of by Augustine, and in the Communion Collect in the "Book of Common Prayer." In this sense every Christian, from

the simplest child to the loftiest saint and master of Christian thought—from a Dorcas or a Phœbe to a Paul or an Augustine, is inspired. It is more difficult to distinguish this, by any sharp and compact definition from the special inspiration which we ascribe to the writers of Holy Scripture, inasmuch as the former equally with the latter is supernatural—as really beyond the mere workings of nature, as the visions of an Isaiah or a John. It is, too, illuminating as well as purifying, an unction of spiritual vision as well as of inward sanctity—unveiling truth as well as kindling love, the very “ Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ ; by which the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Still we may distinguish from this the special inspiration of Scripture, if not with regard to its source, at least with regard to its effects, and define it, as

3. *The Inspiration of infallible guidance.* This clearly was the very purpose for which the special illumination of the first messengers of the faith was required, and for which it was expressly promised to them by their Lord. Thus alone could the heavenly Comforter and Guide be said “ to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance ; ”—“ to guide them into all the truth ; ”—“ to show them things to come.” Thus alone could they be qualified to fulfil their sacred function as “ the ambassadors of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,” both delivering in uncorrupted purity His message to the men of their own age, and

handing it down in unerring words to the generations following. The inspiration of genius unveils the deepest truths of nature, but does not go beyond nature. The inspiration of grace apprehends and realises the truths of revelation, but does not reveal. The inspiration of the sacred Book does both. It is the inspiration of which Paul speaks when he says, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." The inspiration, therefore, of which we are now speaking, may be thus briefly defined in contradistinction alike to the inspiration of genius and the inspiration of grace;—as distinguished from the former, it is Supernatural,—as distinguished from the latter, it is Extraordinary and Infallible.

So much for the *positive* aspect of the doctrine. It will be necessary, however, before closing, to consider it also on its *negative* side, with the view alike of obviating possible misapprehension, and more definitely estimating results. It is important not only to know what Inspiration is, but also what it is not.

(1.) Then, *It does not imply any suppression or abeyance of the natural powers and faculties of the writers.* It neither extinguishes their individuality, nor restrains the free play of their human thoughts and feelings. It elevates, illuminates, guides, informs the essential and indestructible powers of the soul, but does not supersede them. It is not the supplanting of the human by the divine, but the blending and mutual

interaction of the human and the divine. In this sense, therefore, it is dynamical, not mechanical,—not a mere dictation of words, but an inspiration of thoughts, feelings, truths. The words, too, are indeed inspired, but only in and with the things of which they are the expression and the symbol. The sacred writers speak and write not only what they have received, but what they have inwardly felt and realised,—the truths they have learned, the experiences they have passed through, the combats, struggles, aspirations, they have personally known,—so that the words they utter come forth, not from the depths of the divine mind only, but from the depths also of their own hearts. Thus in the psalms of David we have not only God's words, but David's words, the utterance of his inmost heart, and of all the varied experiences of his life,—as shepherd, warrior, patriot, king, a worshipper, a penitent, an exile, a pardoned sinner, a triumphant saint,—and in them we are permitted to witness, and in a sense to share, the whole work and warfare of his life—his consolations and victories, his combats, struggles, and wounds.

Hence one of the peculiar excellencies of Holy Scripture. It is as utterly human as it is truly and absolutely divine. It comes as closely near us, as it rises far above us. It is at once our sacred teacher, and our personal bosom friend. Speaking human words, uttering human feelings, realising human sins, sorrows, temptations, and unlocking the fountains of human tears, it is in a special sense like to Him who is at once our Master and our Brother, the Son of Mary, and the Son of God,—who hath the tongue of

the learned, to speak a word in season to them that are weary, because He was in all points tempted like as they are, yet without sin.

Hence, too, the endless variety of the sacred writings, and their marvellous adaptation to all sorts and conditions of men. Not only does each writer deliver his own special message, but follows his own special bent of thought and language. Thus the Book is rich, at once in those touches of our common nature that make all men kin, and in those fresh traits of individual life which touch the sympathies of particular men.

While, however, this characteristic of the sacred writings is the source of some of their greatest excellencies, to it also are to be traced some of their greatest difficulties. Where the human and the divine are so inextricably blended in one common result, it becomes absolutely impossible clearly to discriminate the one from the other, to fix any definite point, where the one element ends and the other begins. We cannot determine *à priori*, either the kind or the amount of those human characteristics which may in the divine wisdom be found compatible, with the perfection of the final result, what freedom of historical detail, what popular rendering of scientific facts, what peculiarities of style and thought, what lesser irregularities in grammar or in diction, what liberty in quoting and in accommodating remembered words, what necessary anthropomorphisms and partial views and perspective glimpses of truth,—which in their absolute fulness cannot be uttered by man.

All this was inevitable from the very conditions of the problem which the divine wisdom had to solve, how best to speak of things divine in human words, and from a human point of view. Of this only we may be sure, that whatever of the distinctively human is permitted to mingle with the purely divine, is left there just because it is best that it should be there, and because what might appear to us imperfections in the parts, only contribute in the eye of unerring wisdom to the more absolute perfection of the whole.

(2.) *Inspiration does not imply an equal clearness and fulness in the exhibition of divine truth in every part of the same book.* On the contrary, it is one of its excellencies that it is progressive, proceeding from less to more, from the germ to the ripened fruit, from the faint dawn to the perfect day.

I am tempted in conclusion, for a moment, to refer to the analogy which may be traced between the rearing of the sublime temple of inspired truth, and the rearing by slow degrees, through a long succession of years, and by the co-operation of many hands, of a stately earthly pile,—some vast cathedral church, or temple of learning, of science and philosophy. In the one case, just as in the other, the labourers are many, but the design is one. That design to human eye grows and extends, as the successive segments of the vast edifice rise from the ground, and resolve themselves as they advance into the varying form of solid masonry, traceried window, columned aisle, Gothic archway or lofty tower,—but it does not grow. It existed in the architect's

mind, and before the architect's mind's eye, in absolute perfection and completeness from the first. Meanwhile there is not order, but disorder ; not beauty, but deformity, save only here and there in the separate parts, as some graceful shaft or delicately chiselled capital comes fresh from the skilled artist's hand. Crowds of workmen throng the ground, and cross and recross each other's path in multitudinous confusion, obliterating every trace of symmetrical form, or of intelligible design. Each knows his own part of the work and does it, but knows little and thinks little of that of others, or of the great whole to which all alike contribute their share. Some dig the deep foundation ; some rear the walls, some shape the groined arch, or carve the delicate tracery. Some wield the mattock, some the trowel, some the chisel. Some work in stone, some in marble, some in wood, some in iron or brass. Some are famous for their strength, some for their taste, some for their skill. But all work together to the fulfilment of the same design—the realisation of the same sublime conception—as day by day the mighty edifice grows under their hands, and rises up to the sky, and reveals more and more its fair proportions and manifold uses, till at last the headstone is brought forth with shouting, and the unsubstantial vision in the architect's soul is translated into everlasting stone, and the finished work remains the ornament and the pride of the land that owns it from generation to generation.

Even so it is that the living temple of God's revealed truth was slowly reared in the course of

many ages, and by the instrumentality of many inspired penmen, from the first promise at the gate of Eden, to the last blessing in the Apocalypse,—and now it is ours to dwell beneath its shadow, and to tread its sacred courts, and to feed upon the hidden manna that lies within its holy place, and to listen to the grand symphony, in which the voices of Patriarchs, Prophets, Psalmists, Evangelists, Apostles, blend together and peal through its lofty arches evermore, and to think the while of those thousands, and tens of thousands, who in successive generations have found in it a home and a rest, and now slumber beneath its shade, waiting for the resurrection of the just.

“Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death.”

LECTURE IX.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE BIBLE.

IN entering on the consideration of Bible difficulties, it may be as well to distinguish between two things, very closely and vitally connected indeed, but still, in themselves, essentially distinct. The Inspiration of the Bible is one thing; the Truth of Christianity, generally, as a divine revelation, is another. Of the former there are various theories, or at least various shades of opinion, even amongst Christian men; of the latter there is none, and room for none. The great supernatural facts and dispensations which the Bible records, and in which the very essence of our religion consists, might be absolutely true, and true as the Bible relates them; and yet that sacred history itself not be in all points a very minute detail, strictly exact and accurate. The facts themselves, in short, are one thing: the record of the facts, and the book which contains that record, is another. Thus the great leading events in the history of the first Napoleon, and of the tremendous European struggle of which he was the central figure, may be and is as certain to us as the existence of this world, or of ourselves; and yet the most authentic and faithful history of those eventful days extant in our language or

in any language may not be free from imperfection, or even considerable errors in detail. The inaccuracies or even serious misstatements in, say Sir Walter Scott's *Life of Napoleon*, or in that of *Bourrienne*, or of *Thiers*, do not raise within any rational mind the shadow of a doubt, either as to the historical reality of the life itself, or of its great leading features. In the same way the grand outstanding facts of our Lord's manifestation in the flesh might be absolutely true, and yet the evangelical histories which relate them not so plenarily inspired as to preserve them from all possibility of error, in trivial and circumstantial matters. Nay, we can even conceive the facts to be true, and yet the recorded history of them not inspired at all. Thus the Son of God, the promised Consolation of Israel, might have come in the flesh, just as we know He did come in the fulness of time, been born of a woman of the seed of David, lived, taught, wrought miracles, died, risen again, ascended on high, and sent down from on high the Pentecostal fire, which still burns in the hearts of men, and shall burn on to the end of time,—and yet the preservation of those momentous facts for the consolation and help of all succeeding generations might have been left, conceivably at least, to the ordinary channels of authentic history; and amongst all authentic histories there are, as we have already shown, none that bear so clear and deep a stamp of authenticity as these wondrous and imperishable annals. Call them inspired or not inspired, still they are true, and therefore, the wondrous life they record, and the religion which is bound up inseparably

with it, are divine. It might have pleased God, had so it seemed good to Him in His infinite wisdom, thus to leave us with an authentic and substantially certain knowledge of a divine and living Christ, but without an inspired Bible. He has not so left us. In our last Lecture we were able, I believe, demonstrably to show that we have in the Bible, not only a substantially authentic and trustworthy history, but an inspired and infallible record of the great facts on which our religion is based. But what I am now wishing to point out and to impress upon you is this,—that even though we had not succeeded in that proof, even then it would by no means follow that our preaching is vain, and your faith also vain. The divine Christ is one thing; the divine Book is another; and though scepticism, by a gigantic achievement which it has not yet accomplished, and never will accomplish, should rob us of the one, it will not even then have robbed us of the other. The question of inspiration, in short, unspeakably important as it is, concerns, strictly speaking, only the external defences or outworks of the faith; the divine-human life of Christ is the citadel itself. In contending for strict views of inspiration, we are contending for the integrity of a great Christian doctrine; in vindicating the authenticity of the gospel history, we are defending the very foundation on which Christianity is based.

Let us proceed, then, to our brief survey of Bible difficulties with this important distinction clearly fixed in our mind. It may even at the outset greatly help to calm the mind of any who may have been unduly dis-

turbed by those difficulties, to remember that though we could conceive ourselves to lose this battle, even then all would not be lost; that the truth of Christianity and of the great salvation of God, does not stand or fall even with that view of inspiration which we hold and defend; that we are fighting here rather only for one of the goodly towers and bulwarks of the city of God, than for its deep and eternal foundation.

The difficulties of the Bible have been in our day greatly exaggerated—exaggerated alike by the baseless assumptions and hasty conclusions of adversaries, and by the vague and ungrounded fears of its friends. “In the present day,” says an excellent writer, whose fresh, vigorous, and memorable volume, entitled—“*Rays of Light, or Church Themes and Life-Problems*,”* I would most cordially recommend to you, “in the present day, although we are hearing but little about the difficulties of infidelity, we hear many talking loudly about the difficulties and discrepancies of the Bible. These are flared up and paraded in the broad light of day, as if to deter men from the study of a book in which they abound, or at least to prejudge and prejudice its claims as being a revelation from God. We hear much of the difficulties which the Bible has created; but little or nothing of those it has cleared up. And what now would be thought of one continually pointing to the spots in the sun, while ignoring the light of day? or what of one who should refuse to enjoy that light, until these spots were either wholly expunged, or fully

* By the Rev. John Philip, M.A., Fordoun.

explained? Equally foolish are those who, while harping perpetually on the difficulties of Scripture, refuse to acknowledge the benefit of revelation, or to be guided by the light it has shed on the darkness which preceded it."

Such as they are, however, it becomes us fairly and candidly to consider them, and this we propose to do in the remarks that are to follow. Of course a general survey of the ground, and a more particular notice of the more salient points, is all we can attempt in a single lecture.

The chief difficulties of Scripture, real or alleged, may all be arranged under three heads,—Scientific difficulties; Historical difficulties; Moral difficulties. I shall consider each of these separately in the order in which I have now named them—dwelling, however, chiefly on the first two.*

1. Of *scientific difficulties* properly so called, or apparent contradictions of the facts and laws of nature as established by modern scientific discovery, very few indeed have been alleged even by the adversaries of the faith. The wonder truly is, not that those difficulties are so many, but that they are so few; not that they should be capable of being found, but that they should require so much ingenuity and keenness of research to find them, and to make anything plausible whatever in the way of objection out of them. It cannot be denied that the statements of Scripture, taken as a whole, are in perfect harmony with the most advanced results of science, that the general scope and tenor of the view

* The third was dealt with by a subsequent Lecturer in the same course.

given us in the one volume, of the general course or order of the world, is in an entire accord with that revealed, everyday, with greater clearness and fulness in the other ; that in short, we may live habitually under the teaching of Holy Scripture, converse with it daily and hourly, become intimately familiar with all its ways of viewing things, alike in nature and in providence, and yet *not* find ourselves coming into perpetual collision, or almost ever even into apparent collision, with any fact or law established by modern human discovery. The points of agreement are manifold ; the points even of seeming difference are trivial and few. Any one may easily satisfy himself of this, by simply asking himself this question,—Laying out of account the single case of the first chapter of Genesis, when did even the shadow of a scientific difficulty cross your mind, in connection either with any Bible text, or clearly established fact of science ? True, the Bible does not teach science, or speak of the familiar phenomena of the world in the language of science. But in this, the most common candour ought to recognise its excellence, not its defect. Its grand design, and therefore its single aim, is to teach not science but religion, and in doing this it fitly speaks not in the language of science, but of common life and of common men. Hence it speaks familiarly of the sun and the stars rising and setting, of the earth being established that it could not be moved, and of the falling of a stone to the ground, and of everything else in the outer world just as they appear to us, and are to us, totally without reference to the earth's motion on its axis, or of the law

of gravitation,—just as every rational man does in the intercourse of common life, and even every writer however profoundly versed in science, except when writing for a distinctly scientific purpose. Do you suppose that a Herschell or a Whewell could not make the familiar remark that the sun had risen an hour ago, without pedantically referring to the fact that it had not really *risen* at all, but that the earth had only moved a little on its axis?

But there is much more significance than at first sight appears, in the fact that the Bible does not teach science, or mix up its sublime discoveries of the will and dispensations of God with scientific questions. Other writings of the same ancient times, and especially the religious writings, do deal with science, and deal with it absurdly and erroneously. The mythologies of Egypt and of India, the philosophy of Greece even in its highest noon, and in the writings of Plato and of Aristotle, are full of the crudities and errors, which were universally prevalent in that age of the infancy of science, and which it was not given to the most illustrious pioneers of the race to rise above. A giant in speculative philosophy,—in matters of physical research Plato himself is but a child, and thinks as a child, and speaks as a child. Why is it otherwise with the writers of Holy Scripture? Why in its sacred pages is there such a conspicuous absence of that element of scientific crudity and wild extravagance which is so universal elsewhere? Why does it not ever and anon astound us with such palpable blunders in physical fact and geographical description as we find in the writings even

of Herodotus the "father of history"? Why, with that grand reserve on all abstruse questions of science which it was not its business to teach, and which the men of those ancient times, even had it been taught them, could not have understood, is there at the same time such a perfect general consistency, with all that scientific research has in the course of successive ages brought to light? How is it that, written in the dim, grey dawn of human knowledge, when, in the lack of all true science, the whole world of thought was a phantom-land of whimsical fancies and crude hypotheses, it presents us with no exploded scientific fact, or worn-out and obsolete theory, and can bear to be read with keen scrutinizing eyes in the nineteenth century after Christ, even as in the days of Moses or of Joshua? How are we to explain this? What account are we to give of a phenomenon so singular, so altogether unparalleled in the literature of the ancient world? For my part, I can see no rational or probable explanation of it, unless we are content to trace in it the manifest working of the finger of God, of the present and infallible guidance of the divine, omniscient, all-revealing Spirit.

But then there is the miraculous element, so characteristic alike of the Old Testament and the New,—those frequent interruptions of physical order and law as revealed by science, which in the scripture narratives are connected with the great epochs of the divine dispensations?—Of course there is this element, and we have already shown that there could not possibly have been a divine supernatural revelation without it; and

we have shown too, that the truth of miraculous facts is not incompatible with the strictest scientific views of natural fact and law. We do not maintain that miracles occur in the ordinary course of nature as revealed by science, that water is turned into wine, or that deadly diseases depart by the force of natural law at the whisper of a human voice, or the touch of a human hand. Miracles are not facts of nature, but facts above and beyond nature, with which science therefore has nothing to do, and which it can neither contradict nor prove. Nay, so far as science has anything to say in regard to miracles at all, it speaks, as we had occasion to show in a former Lecture, rather for them, than against her, for she, too, has her miracles; her great initial and creative epochs, when all her ordinary processes of sequence and of law palpably fail her as an explanation of the phenomena with which she has to deal, and which seem to demand the interposition of a direct fiat of divine will and power, identical in principle with the miraculous facts to which the Scriptures bear witness. Creation, let it never be forgotten, if there be such a thing as creation, is nothing other and nothing less than a miracle. It is a thing not within the course of nature, which indeed it originates and calls into being, but above and before it. It is an everlasting witness to the living presence, independent being, and immediate will and power of God.

But what of the Mosaic account of the creation, and of the alleged discrepancies between it and the corresponding revelations of geological science? Yes, this is

in our day the great battle-field of faith and unbelief, so far as the relation of science and revelation are concerned ; but it is a battle-field which, as it seems to me, we need not fear to approach. Already nine-tenths of the difficulties, which were once thought to beset that mysterious territory, have vanished before the light of a sounder Biblical interpretation, and a fuller scientific induction, and the rest, if any indeed of serious moment still remain, will, I cannot doubt, speedily follow them. First, The gratuitous imagination that the Scripture taught the original creation of the world, and the absolute beginning of our present mundane system as coincident with the creation of man, was exploded, as an unwarrantable inference from the inspired words.

Next, The hasty assumption that the six grand cycles of the Creator's working—those mighty days of God—were necessarily to be understood as simply literal days of common time, measured by a single revolution of the earth on its axis, was exposed and abandoned.

Then, The still more natural, and therefore, more rooted error, that the appearance of light must have succeeded the creation of the sun and the other celestial orbs, and must have followed from it as its immediate effect, was dismissed as a scientific delusion. Take away these three errors alone, and already two-thirds of the supposed discrepancies between the Mosaic record and the "Testimony of the Rocks," vanish with them. For the rest, and taking the entire Mosaic record as a whole, what I am struck with, is not the occasional appearance of difference, but the grand and truly wonderful harmony of the two accounts ;

a harmony which, when we consider that the sacred text, written in the very infancy of science, or rather before science was born, has in the great leading features of its representations anticipated the highest results of science by three thousand years, must appear scarcely less than miraculous. Whether we regard the Mosaic oracle as a literal historic record of the successive acts of creation, such as they might have appeared to an angel-witness, hovering over the scene on viewless wings; or, as seems more likely, a grand inspired poem or psalm, presenting in shadowy outline as in prophetic vision, in a series of sublime dissolving views, the great successive epochs of the Creator's working, the accordance is almost equally striking. "There is," says Dr McCosh (*Christianity and Positivism*, pp. 434), "account for it as we may, a general correspondence between the record in the Bible, and the record in stone. My friend, Hugh Miller, may not have been able to point out an identity in every particular, but he has certainly established a general congruity. There is an order, and there is a congruity, very much the same in both. In both there is light before the sun appears. In Genesis, the fiat goes forth 'Let there be light, and there is light,' the first day—and the sun comes forth only on the fourth, in accordance with science, which tells us that the earth was thrown off ages before the sun had been condensed into the centre of the planetary system. In both the inanimate comes before the animate; in both the grass and herb and tree before the animal; in both fishes and fowls before creeping things and cattle. In both we have as

the last of the train, man standing upright, and facing the sky ; made of the dust of the ground, and yet filled with the inspiration of God.

“ As both agree in the history of the past, so both agree as to the future of the world. The Scriptures point not obscurely to a day of dissolution. ‘ The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment.’ All men of science are agreed that, according to the laws now in operation, there is in our system a wasting of energy in the shape of heat, which must in an indefinite time bring our cosmos to a state of chillness and death ; to be followed, some think, by an accumulation of heat, and a conflagration which will reduce all things to star dust ; out of which, by the agglomeration of matter, new worlds will arise. It may be rash in any one to imagine, that he sees so far into the future, in which new powers may appear as they have certainly done in the past : but this, it can be demonstrated, is and must be the issue according to the powers now working. Such is the correspondence between Science and Scripture. You will find no such correspondence between modern discovery, and any work of heathen mythology, eastern or western. *Prima facie*, there must be a great truth in that opening chapter of Genesis which has anticipated geology by three thousand years.”

In fine, and in a single word, the divinity and true inspiration of the Scripture appears, first, In its general reserve in regard to all distinctively scientific questions ; and secondly, In its remarkable accordance with scientific

truth, whenever the great and only purpose of its revelations brings it to the confines of the scientific sphere. It is everywhere non-scientific, yet everywhere consistent with the results of science.

II. On the second class of Bible difficulties, those of *a historical kind*, our time will compel us to dwell somewhat more briefly. Here, also, the number and importance of the apparent discrepancies have been greatly magnified, and those which present any serious difficulty to the candid inquirer are singularly few; so few indeed, as to constitute, when rightly considered, the strongest possible proof of the thoroughly historical character and minute fidelity of ancient writings, dealing so freely and fearlessly in historical details, and touching at so many points the general history of the world. Taken as a whole, and tried especially at those points where their fidelity can be most thoroughly tested, they are characterised throughout by an exact accuracy and vivid truthfulness of fact and colouring, totally alien from the general style of contemporary histories, and to which accordingly there is no parallel in the literature of the ancient world. Fresh facts are continually coming to light to illustrate this remarkable characteristic, and often turning, as by a sudden flash of illumination, a seeming difficulty into a most convincing evidence of truth. The Pyramids of Egypt, the Mounds of Babylon and of Nineveh, the plains of Moab, the altar at Athens, the hills and valleys of the Holy Land, all combine to demonstrate the photographic truthfulness of historic

pictures, which never could have been drawn by human hand, unless they had been drawn from the life. Let me give a single instance selected out of many, as an illustration of the general fact of which I am now speaking. Here, then, is the picture which Moses gives of the general forms and ways of life, in that dim and long-forgotten world of the Egyptian Pharaohs in the days of Joseph and of Moses, as briefly summarised by Professor Rawlinson :—

“The monarchy noted in Gen. xii. continues. The king still bears the title of Pharaoh. He is absolute or nearly so, committing men to prison (xl. 3), and releasing them (v. 21); or, if he please, ordering their execution (v. 22); appointing officers over the whole land, and taxing it apparently at his pleasure (xli. 34); raising a foreigner suddenly to the second position in the kingdom, and requiring all without exception to render him obedience (vv. 41-44). At the same time, the king has counsellors or ministers, elders of his house, (I. 7) and others whose advice he asks, and without whose sanction he does not seem to act in important matters (xli. 37, 38). His court is organised after the fashion of later oriental monarchies. He has a body-guard, under a commander or ‘captain,’ one of whose chief duties is to execute the sentences which he pronounces on offenders (xxxvii. 36). He has a train of confectioners, at the head of whom is a chief ‘confectioner’ (xl. 2), and a train of cup-bearers, at the head of whom is a ‘chief cup-bearer’ (ib.). He rides in a chariot, and all men bow the knee before him (xli. 43). The state of Egypt

is one of somewhat advanced civilisation. There are distinct classes of soldiers (xxxvii. 36), priests (xlvi. 22), physicians (l. 2), and herdsmen (xlvi. 34; xlvii. 6). There is also a class of 'magicians,' or sacred scribes (xli. 8), who may be either a subdivision of the priests, or form a distinct profession. The name given to this last class implies that writing is practised. Among other indications of advance in civilisation are, the mention of 'fine linen,' as worn by some (ib. 42) of a golden neck-chain (ib.), a silver drinking cup (xliv. 2), waggons (xlv. 21), chariots (l. 9), a coffin or mummy case (ib. 26), and the practice of embalming (ib. 2, 26).

Among special peculiarities of the nation are (1.) The position of the priests, which is evidently very exalted (xli. 45), and more particularly their privilege with respect to their lands, which they held by a different tenure from the rest of the people (xlvi. 22). (2.) The existence of customs implying strong feelings with respect to purity or impurity, and a great dread of material defilement (xliii. 32). (3.) A special dislike or contempt for the occupation of herdsmen. And (4.) A greater liberty with respect to the intermixture of the sexes than is common in the east, with a consequent licentiousness in the conduct of the women (xxxix. 7-12).

Other noticeable points are the great fertility of the soil, the existence of numerous granaries (xli. 56), the practice of carrying burdens on the head (xl. 16), the use by the monarch of a signet ring (xli. 42), the employment of bought slaves (xxxix. 1), the importation of spices from Arabia (xxvii. 25), the use of stewards (xxxix. 41;

xliv. 1), the washing of guests' feet (xliii. 24), the practice of sitting at meals (ib. 38), the use of wine (xl. 11 ; xliii. 34), and meat (xliii. 16), and the employment of some mode, which is not explained, of divination by cups (xliv. 5)."

This is surely a sufficiently minute and circumstantial account of Egyptian life and Egyptian customs and ways in those old Pharaoh-ine days,—that strange palaeozoic world of history in which the mouldering occupants of our mummy cases lived, and moved, and toiled, and died, and presents assuredly abundant scope for contradictions and sure detection, had the writer been a mere manufacturer of fictitious legends in a long after age. How then does the fact stand? In the words of the learned writer already quoted, with whose general statement only I must now content myself, referring you to his admirable and deeply interesting volume for the proofs in detail. "It may be broadly stated that in this entire description, there is not a single feature which is out of harmony with what we know of the Egypt of this remote period from other sources. Nay more,—almost every point in it is confirmed, either by the classical writers, by the monuments, or by both" (Historical Illustrations, pp. 89, *seq*).

Another extract from this learned writer will bring us into the very heart of our more specific subject, the historical difficulties of Scripture. "It would weary the reader," he says, "were we to proceed further with this confirmation of the Mosaic narrative, in all its details. A simple, and perhaps a stronger, confirmation is to be

found in an examination of those few points, in respect of which modern rationalism has ventured to impugn the sacred history, and, on the strength of which, it has been argued that the writer of the Pentateuch was unacquainted with Egypt, and composed his work many centuries after the time of Moses. Now, the points to which exception is made are chiefly these—(1.) The mention of camels and asses among the possessions of Abraham in Egypt. (2.) The blasting of the ears of corn by the east wind. (3.) The cultivation of the vine and the use of wine in Egypt. (4.) The use of flesh for food, especially by one connected with the higher castes of the Egyptians as Joseph was. (5.) The employment of eunuchs, regarded as implied in xxxvii. 36. (6.) The possibility of famine in Egypt. And (7.) The possibility of such a marriage as is said to have taken place between a foreign shepherd and the daughter of the high priest of Heliopolis.”

Well, the remarkable thing is, that every one of these counts of indictment has conspicuously broken down as the result of subsequent investigation, each single statement of the sacred writer admitting either of direct proof from other sources, monumental or documentary, or of such illustration as render the facts impugned in the highest degree probable. Thus to take the several allegations in their order—(1.) We know now for certain that asses did abound in Egypt, and we may with safety infer that camels also were no strangers, as they always abounded in countries of Asia bordering upon Egypt, and must have been used in any traffic which

existed between her and her Eastern neighbours. (2.) Under the term "east wind" would be included the south-east, which is frequent in Egypt, and so injurious that, as Ukert tells us, "it works destruction upon everything." The grass withers, so that it entirely perishes if this wind blows long. (3.) As to the vine and the drinking of wine, it is now certain from the monuments, in the face of the statements both of Herodotus and Plutarch, that the cultivation of the grape, the art of making wine, and the practice of drinking it, were well known in Egypt at least from the time of the Pyramids. (4.) As to the use of animal food by high-caste Egyptians, there really is not a vestige of evidence that any class of the people, not even the priests, habitually abstained from it; while the cooking scenes which abound on all the monuments prove demonstrably that it was the principal food of the upper classes. Finally, As to the last three charges, we know from Manetho, the Egyptian priest, that eunuchs *were* an ancient Egyptian institution; it is a fact certain, beyond the possibility of dispute, that Egypt was subject to the scourge of famine whenever the inundation of the Nile fell below the average, and that in point of fact its people did suffer terribly from it; and last of all, as to Joseph's marriage, he would not be known in Egypt as a herdsman, but as an adopted member of the royal family, high in the favour of the king,—and the power of the monarch's will was surely potent for much more than the arrangement of an advantageous marriage in behalf of a distinguished

courtier, statesman, and friend whom he delighted to honour.

What a notable instance have we here of the truth of the old proverb, "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him"! Thus startled by the torch of modern antiquarian search, does old Egypt awake from its long sleep in Pyramids and mummy-caves, to bear witness to the truth and minute fidelity of the infallible and ever-living oracles of God.

On the chronological difficulties involved in the numerical calculations drawn from the statements in Genesis and Exodus, with regard chiefly to the length of the period which elapsed between the time of the Flood and the time of the Exodus, our rapidly lessening space will not permit me to enter, and I therefore prefer referring you for information to the excellent little work of Professor Rawlinson just quoted, where you will find the subject very ably handled. I would only here make the general remark, that of all questions of ancient history, there are none which are involved in so much uncertainty as those which relate to numbers and numerical calculations, —the original mode of expressing them in all countries of which we have any knowledge having been by signs often scarcely distinguishable from one another, and in consequence, peculiarly liable to corruption from the mistakes of copyists; and the force of this consideration is particularly apparent in the present instance, as in the three versions of the Pentateuch which we possess the numbers are in each case given differently. Dismiss-

ing, then, this question of numbers, to which from the nature of the case little or no importance can be attached, I shall pass on to one or two points of greater interest, and which admit, at the same time, of more succinct and intelligible statement. Of these, two shall be from the Old Testament and two from the New.

The first is one which was brought forward, and pressed as of very great moment, some years ago, by the late Baron Bunsen. The original kingdom of Babylon is represented in the tenth chapter of Genesis to have been from a Cushite stock; but Baron Bunsen held that there were no Cushites out of Africa, and that an Asiatic Cush existed only in the imagination of Biblical interpreters, and was the child of their despair. Such was the objection. Take now the decisive answer in the words of the learned historian of the five ancient monarchies whom I have already repeatedly quoted: "An analysis of the earliest documents recovered from Babylonia has shown that the primitive Babylonian people, that which raised the first structures whereof any trace remains in the country, and whose buildings had gone to ruin in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, *was* (at least to a large extent) Cushite, its vocabulary being undoubtedly Cushite or Ethiopian, and presenting numerous analogies with those of the non-Semitic races of modern Abyssinia. Hence modern historical science, in the person of one of its best representatives (M. Lenormant), commences now the history of the East with a 'first Cushite empire,' which it regards as dominant in Babylonia for several centuries before the earliest

Semitic empire arose " ! So much for the *ipse dixit* of a self-confident rationalistic criticism, and the imaginative despair of orthodox biblical expositors.

In 2 Kings xv. 19, we are told of an invasion of the kingdom of Samaria by Pul king of Assyria, who is said to have put Menahem to a tribute of a thousand talents of silver. Now it appears clearly from the history of the Assyrian monarchy, which we possess for this period in a state of tolerable completeness, that there was not at this time, or indeed at any time, any monarch at Nineveh bearing the name of Pul, or any name in the least resembling it. We have in the muster roll of those ancient kings such names as Shalmaneser, Ashin-dayon, Ashin-lush, immediately preceding the better-known Tiglath-peleser, but *no Pul*; and yet, under the reign of one or other of these, the events recorded, if true at all, must have taken place. Well, the difficulty here seems certainly at first sight serious enough, and might well have suggested to such a critic as Bunsen the impossibility of any explanation except such as should be the creation of imaginative expositors, and the child of exegetical despair. Why, as there *was* at that time no Pul king of Assyria, what recourse was there but to create one for the occasion, and palm him off as a real *dramatis persona* in the history of the world? Nay, but let us not be quite so hasty in this matter. We are not yet driven to so desperate an expedient; for it turns out that there was a Pul, called by Berosus King of the Chaldeans, who probably reigned at Babylon while Ashin-lush was reigning at Nineveh,—

and during the confused and troubled state of Assyria at the time, seems to have acquired a temporary ascendancy over that empire, deprived it of some of its western provinces, and materially crippled its power. In these circumstances, heading, as he would naturally do, the eastern hordes in any incursions they might then make on the countries of Western Asia, and thus representing for the time that dreaded power which was only known to them under the name of Assyria, it was almost inevitable that he should be spoken of in any Jewish or Syrian chronicle of that time as an Assyrian king. It was much as if a writer in China should speak of some British author as an English historian or poet, when in point of literal fact he was a Scotchman or an Irishman. There would be room here for the quibbling cavils of small minds, but no real violation of historical truth, inasmuch as from the writer's point of view, and for the purpose in hand, Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen are all the same, and are best represented by the best known name.

In the New Testament I scarcely know of any considerable historical difficulty except one, that, namely, which is connected with the statement about the taxing in Luke iii. 1, 2. The difficulty does not turn so much on the fact of the taxing, or rather the census with a view to the taxing itself, as this admits of considerable illustration and confirmation from other sources, as on the time assigned to it—viz., “when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.” Now, it appears from other historical authorities that Cyrenius's governorship of Syria did not

take place till nine or ten years later, and that the office was in point of fact at that time held by another bearing the name of Sentius Saturninus; but it turns out, as the result of a recent interesting discovery, that *both* Saturninus and Cyrenius occupied at the period in question the position of governor of Syria—Saturninus as resident ruler, and Cyrenius as governor of Cilicia, to which Syria was then united. As supreme administrator, therefore, of the province, the order for the census would probably proceed from him, and would be all the more naturally connected with his name, as by a subsequent appointment he became more closely connected with Syria itself. There are other ways of explaining the difficulty; but this, it appears to me, is the most simple and satisfactory.

Here we must close our review of Bible difficulties. These are fair samples of the sort of historical discrepancies which have been produced and paraded by opponents of the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture, and our time of course does not permit of giving more than samples; but *ex uno disce omnes*. From the nature of the sample you may form a judgment of the character of the piece, and those who wish to go deeper into the details of the subject may consult with much advantage the excellent volume I have already so often referred to, entitled “Historical Illustrations of the Old Testament,” by the Rev. G. Rawlinson, M.A., Camden’s Professor of Ancient History in the University of Oxford. (London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.)

Let me conclude by suggesting one or two practical lessons derivable from the whole subject.

1. Do not allow yourself to be over-much troubled with arithmetical puzzles, such as those in which Colenso so largely deals, referring to apparent discrepancies of numbers and dates. From the cause already explained, no calculations founded on the signs of number in ancient MSS. are reliable, and can therefore have no weight in argument either way.

2. Beware of attaching too much weight to the confident and sweeping assertions of great authorities. Bunsen's is a great and honoured name not only generally, but specially, in the sphere of Egyptological research, and yet we have seen how egregiously he blunders in his *ex cathedra* assertions about Babylonia and the ancient Cushite race.

3. And finally, let us ever look at particular difficulties in the light of the transcendent and demonstrable truthfulness of these sacred and imperishable annals considered as a whole, and in the full remembrance of the singular manner in which time after time apparent discrepancies have not only been cleared away, but turned into the most convincing evidence of minute and exact fidelity,—and we shall then be slow to adopt the charge of historical error in a document referring to time so remote, and to a state of the world so imperfectly known to us, until time and patient research have exhausted the means of elucidating the mystery, and every possible method of reconciling apparent discrepancies

have been tried in vain. Let us remember how very little we know at all about those old times, and that nine-tenths of what we do know is due to that very volume on which we presume to sit in judgment.

ECCLESIASTICAL ESSAYS.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.



CATHOLICISM AND SECTARIANISM.

“Credo in Spiritum Sanctum, Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam, Sanctorum communionem.”

THE various questions which, for more than fifteen centuries, have agitated the Christian world concerning the true idea and constitution of the Church, and which in the course of ages have given birth to so many controversies and so many schisms, are all resolvable more or less into one—the question of *Unity*. Apparently distinct, and branching out into regions of thought the most diverse, they yet all converge on this single central point. They respect either the unity of *doctrine*, the unity of *fellowship*, or the unity of *life*;—the one faith, the one communion, the one spirit of Christ’s mystical body on the earth. To the first head belong all questions concerning authority and the standard and test of truth; to the second, concerning the centre of unity and terms of ecclesiastical communion; to the third, concerning the channel and conditions of spiritual life; and all alike presuppose as their common

basis, an idea still more primary and fundamental—that of one divine and indivisible body, founded on one faith, united in one holy fellowship, and animated by one divine spirit of life in Christ.

This threefold division of the great general question flows necessarily from the very nature of Christianity itself. In its primary idea and essence it is at once a divine doctrine, a divine society, and a divine life. It is a revelation of God's truth, the establishment of God's kingdom, and a dispensation of God's Spirit. It must, therefore, have a faith, a communion, and a principle of common life. As a doctrine, it must have an infallible standard and test of truth; as a society, it must have a centre and terms of fellowship; as a life, it must have a source and spring of spiritual influence. Each of these is one, even as Christianity itself is one. Under each head it is a divine institution, one and indivisible. Under each it possesses a character peculiar to itself, and which constitutes its distinctive principle and essence. Under each, the question, What is Christianity? must admit of a distinct and categorical reply, and that reply will shape itself substantially as a solution of these three fundamental problems: What is the one faith of God's elect? What is the one communion of saints on earth? What is the one depository and channel of spiritual influence and grace? Such is the radical principle and main heads of that great argument, which for ages has occupied the thoughts both of speculative and practical minds within the Church of Christ, and which at this hour divides the whole strength of

visible Christendom into two vast and irreconcilably antagonistic hosts.

The solution which Rome has given to this great problem possesses one decided and obvious advantage—its great simplicity. To each of the vital questions involved, it gives a clear, direct, decisive, and unhesitating reply. On each its language is at once positive, authoritative, and, alike in its theory and practical results, intelligible to every one. There is one distinct and visible society, scattered over all countries, and existing in all time; yet everywhere and always, in doctrine, discipline, government, worship, and organic life, one and the same, and marked by certain broad and grand characteristics which unmistakably stamp it as divine. This is the one catholic Church of God—the guardian and witness of the one faith, the household of the one fellowship, and the depository and dispenser of the one spirit of life. Her reply to the first question, is the Infallibility; to the second, the Popedom; to the third, the Priesthood and the sacraments. For the one faith, she points us to her creeds, and to herself as their interpreter; for the one fellowship, to her apostolic see, and all who own subjection to and hold communion with it; for the one life, to every altar and confessional in Christendom. Thus, to all the deepest and most momentous questions which can agitate the human soul—What is truth? Where is rest? Where the fountain and channel of eternal life?—she has one summary and brief supply, and that reply expressed in a single word—Rome. No faith without the Church; no Church

without the Pope; and without the Church and the Pope, no grace, no salvation. Here, then, is nothing vague, nothing ambiguous, nothing difficult or abstract either in theory or in practice. The way she points is so plain that he that runs may read; patent alike to the philosopher and the child, to the Roman cardinal and to the Irish beggar, and the only question that remains is—whether it be true or false?

That question, indeed, is not of difficult solution. As a matter simply of rational investigation, it cannot for a moment stand the test either of Scripture or of history. As a scriptural dogma, it is a pure figment; as a fact in history, it is a gigantic anachronism. Claiming to be received as a divine and apostolic institution, it is without the faintest trace of its existence either in the apostolic writings or in the apostolic Church for more than two hundred years. A simple and unsophisticated reader, whether of the inspired documents or of the early Christian annals, far from finding the incontestable evidence of its claims, fails to form even the faintest conception of it, even as a possible theory. Notoriously and demonstrably it was the birth and gradual growth of an after-age—an age of civil and social dissolution, and of deep and growing religious corruption—and owes whatever claims it possesses to the reverence and submission of mankind, not to such names as Paul and John and Polycarp, but to those of Damasus and Innocent and Hildebrand. Thus far, then, the issue of this great debate is not doubtful. On the ground of logical argument, the triumph of the Protestant advocate has been

from the first, and ever must be, decisive and inevitable. The Roman pretensions have been refuted a thousand times, conclusively, unanswerably, and will be so again and again, whenever the great issues involved are fairly grappled with in the light of Scripture evidence and historical fact.

But, unfortunately, even then the work is not more than half done. After all, the Roman theory does not require so much to be refuted as to be superseded. Like every mighty error, it can be effectually and permanently dispossessed only by the corresponding truth. Its strength lies not in its argument, but in its very presence. Essentially it is its own evidence. It does not so much convince men as fascinate them. It subdues not by discourse of reason or induction of facts, but by the mere witchery of its magic wand. Men do not try Rome's credentials and pronounce them valid, but wonder after her and bow before her. There is something, in short, in its whole aspect and form—a certain barbaric vastness and grandeur, a consistency and completeness, a solid mass and stability, together with a simplicity and directness in its mode of dealing with every question of faith and duty, that exercises an irresistible charm, not only over the ignorant multitude, but over a certain class of speculative minds, and which, instead of being destroyed by argument, is not even appreciably affected by it. The truth is that Romanism is strong, not so much as a falsehood, as a perversion of the truth, and can, therefore, be exorcised and overcome only by the manifestation and living embodiment of that truth itself. Albeit in a carnal and perverted

form, she yet does present before the eyes of men the semblance, at least, of that grand unity of faith and fellowship and life which essentially belongs to the mystical body of Christ, and even that semblance, poor and earthly as it is, must exercise a mighty influence, ay and until it be confronted with the divine reality. Now, it is precisely here that Protestantism hitherto has shown itself weakest. She has ever been far more successful in overthrowing the theory of Rome than in realising her own. Instead of the one faith, of which her adversary boasts, she has seemed to offer only a multitude of opinions; instead of the one fellowship, a medley of conflicting sects; instead of the one life, the isolated and unaided struggles of the individual soul after salvation and peace. That this is an exaggerated representation of the real state of the case is indeed most true. We shall be easily able to show that, amid so much diversity, and much real or apparent contradiction, there yet exists throughout the great evangelic body an essential unity of faith and conviction, which the mere compression of external authority never can produce. Still, this unity, though real, is not apparent. It is latent, not embodied in outward manifestation. Romanism, amid real discord, presents to the world the semblance of unity; Protestantism, amid real unity, presents to the world the semblance of discord; and so long as this continues so, the Church of the Reformation, despite of its unquestionable superiority in argument, must ever fight at a vast disadvantage against an adversary, which wins the homage of men, not by

what she is, but by what she seems to the carnal eye to be.

How this state of things may be best remedied ; how we may most effectually mend, not our argument, but our position for successfully urging it ; how we may prove ourselves mighty, not alone in the destruction of falsehood, but in the reconstruction and practical embodiment of the antagonist truth, is a question worthy of the earnest consideration of our deepest and most thoughtful minds. In the present essay we can only pretend to glance at some of its more salient points, particularly in its bearing on the circumstances of the present time.

As regards the *UNITY OF FAITH*, which forms the prime boast of our great antagonist, the subject does not appear to us, as against her at least, to be attended with serious difficulties. If there is one faith on the earth at all—one divine doctrine dwelling at once in innumerable hearts, and yet essentially one and the same in all—assuredly that faith is found, not in the communion of Rome, but of the evangelical churches. One creed, indeed, the votaries of authority may and must have ; but one faith, which is the assent of the free soul to a revealed doctrine, on an inward and personal conviction of its truth, they cannot have. For ourselves, we are prepared to accept the strongest statements of our adversary concerning the essential unity of the true faith, and in their most emphatic and unqualified sense to adopt them as our own. We fully believe that there is one “ faith once delivered to the saints,” and that that faith has never

been lost. We believe that the promise of the Spirit of truth, while not securing any particular part of the professing Church from the possibility of error, did secure, and has, in point of fact, preserved the Church as a whole from a fundamental departure from the faith. We are even prepared to accept of the celebrated Lerinensian dictum, which has ever been so great a favourite with Roman and Romanising divines, and to say that the true Catholic faith is that which has been believed and professed "*semper, ubique, et ab omnibus.*" The faith delivered to the saints, we conceive to be that which all the saints have always and everywhere believed, and in which they have lived and died. It is not the faith of one age, or of one country, or of one school, or of one sect, but of all in every age, and country, and school, and sect, to whom the gospel has come home in power, and who are led by the Spirit of God. . . . That faith, indeed, may be more or less clearly apprehended, more or less adequately and articulately expressed, more or less completely drawn out in system, more or less developed in detail and embodied in formal categorical proposition, more or less pure and unmixed with error, but still in essence and substance it is the same. In some the circumference of truth may be wider, and the radiating lines more luminous and distinct than in others, yet still there is the same centre. It is a faith this which is often rather felt than expressed, lived on than contended for, uttered not so much in dogmas as in prayers. It is the same in the first century and in the nineteenth; it is the same in the East and in the West; it is the

same in the schools of theology and in the cottages of the poor; it is the same in the deep revolvings of mightiest spirits, and in the simplest conceptions of lowly piety; it is the same in the Epistles of Paul, in the Confessions of Augustine, in the sermons of Bernard, in the prayers of Luther, in the Contemplations of Hall, in the treatises of Owen, in the hymns of Herbert, in the allegories of Bunyan, in the penitent cries of Andrews, and the seraphic songs of Rutherford—everywhere the same, yet different; in essence identical, in form and colour diverse, even as pure water issuing from a common spring, but passing through different channels, and tinged, as it flows, by different soils. It is the common consciousness of redeemed and regenerated humanity, the echo of the new creation to the voice of Christ, speaking by His Spirit through His Word. . . . If any tribunal on earth, besides the living oracles, may be called infallible, it is this. We may say of it with truth, what Tertullian predicated of the old baptismal creed, “This rule of faith is wholly one, alone unalterable, and admitting of no improvement. This law of faith remaining, in other things pertaining to discipline and life, you may continually grow, through the grace of God working in you even unto the end.” It is the divine reality of which the enforced uniformity of popes and councils is but the carnal and earthly counterfeit.

We do not flatter ourselves that in these observations we have solved the long-pending question concerning essential and non-essential truths—fundamental and non-fundamental articles of faith. A problem which

has for hundreds of years baffled the analysis of the subtlest divines, is not likely so easily to yield to any solvent of ours. That there is a reality at the bottom of the distinction in question, all, or nearly all, will admit and feel; but the difficulty is to define wherein precisely the difference lies, and clearly to draw the line between the one class of doctrines and the other. Perhaps we should not greatly err were we to regard the difference in question as one rather of degree than of essential nature, and speak, accordingly, rather of truths that are more and those that are less essential, than absolutely of those that *are* essential and those that are *not*. The various questions which make up the subject-matter of Christian Theology would then be arranged, not the one part on this side and the other on that of a sharp dividing line, but rather at different distances from a common centre. What that centre is can scarcely come into question. The great idea of redemption through the incarnation and mediatorial work of the Son of God, revealed and applied by the Holy Ghost, stands out before the eye even of the most superficial inquirer as the grand central principle and distinctive essence of the Christian revelation. While that, then, is livingly embraced and practically realised, the substance at least of the one faith is preserved intact, and other doctrines and opinions will take rank, in point of essential importance, in proportion as they stand in nearer or more remote relation to it. In this way the greater part of the so-called variations of Protestant Theology will be regarded not as differences of

faith, but as diverse developments, more or less complete, more or less pure, of the "one faith once delivered to the saints."

Upon the unity of faith is founded the **UNITY OF FELLOWSHIP**. The one divine doctrine gives truth to the one divine society. A community of judgment in regard to all that is dearest and most precious to man for time and for eternity cannot but generate also a community of feeling, of interest, of intercourse, and mutual co-operation and help. Those who, in matters so infinitely vital and sacred, think together, will naturally seek also to walk together, work together, pray together. Hence at once arises the idea of the Church, not as a mere system of doctrines or ordinances, but a living society of believing men united in holy fellowship in Christ Jesus. This flows, indeed, from the very nature of man as a social being, and of Christianity as a social religion in adaptation to it. The same God that made the family, that made the nation, that made the common brotherhood of man, made also the Church to be a still dearer family, a holier nation, a grander and diviner brotherhood of saints. Hence the mere fact of the essential identity of faith in the hearts of all true Christians, to which we have already referred, all wonderful and divine as it is, is not of itself sufficient to express the full idea of the unity of the Church. That faith must not only be believed and loved by each separately, but must be held, and professed, and livingly embodied together by all.

Every view given us in Scripture of the Church, or

of any particular part of it, confirms this. It is the *ecclesia* or common assembly of the saints. It is a flock, not a multitude of scattered sheep. It is a body, not a medley of disjointed members. It is a temple, not a heap of stones. It is a city compactly joined together, not a wilderness of isolated homes. For "there is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." It may, indeed, be said that all this is true only of the invisible Church of true saints, not of any visible society bearing the name; and we, of course, admit that those high attributes never have been fully realised, or, in the present imperfect state, ever will be, in any external fellowship on earth. As the unity of faith lies rather in an identity of inward experience than of articulate confession, so probably will the unity of fellowship be ever more completely realised in an inward oneness of heart than in an outward oneness of communion. Many circumstances, besides mere local separation, may keep those visibly asunder who in feeling and affection, so far as they are known to each other, are wholly one. But what is, is no measure of what ought to be. The necessary imperfection of visible fellowship among Christian men and Christian societies is no reason why they should not aim and strive after that which they have not yet attained. The divine ideal of the perfect Church is surely the only legitimate standard of duty for the imperfect; and her strength, and beauty, and influence for good will be in very proportion to the degree of her approximation to it.

This is emphatically true in the matter of which we are now speaking—the unity of Christian fellowship. Faith is in its very nature an inward thing; fellowship, in large measure at least, outward. Springing from an inward principle, it necessarily seeks its fulfilment and embodies itself in fact. Fellowship can exist only by the *holding* of fellowship; that is to say, by positive relations, and overt acts of mutual affection and brotherhood. It is not love merely, but love carried out in life—love expressing and striving more and more to realise itself in an interchange of loving words and deeds. It is the living contact and communion of Christian with Christian, congregation with congregation, church with church, in a holy association of intercourse, sympathy, action. In the very nature of things, then, visibility is more or less an essential characteristic of it. It is the very condition of its existence, enters necessarily into its definition. You cannot even conceive in your mind the notion of a living society without including in that notion the idea of actual intercourse and communion amongst its members. It belongs, therefore, as an essential property, emphatically to the Church, considered as visible, in contradistinction to the unseen communion of the saints—being that, indeed, wherein mainly its visibility consists, and by virtue of which alone it stands out before the world, not as a multitude of units, but as one body, one brotherhood, one sacred society in Christ.

The principle to which we are now adverting may be of great service in helping us to define more clearly

what is, and what is not, a breach of the unity of the Church. It will be obvious, for instance, if the views we have stated are correct, that a mere diversity of outward forms of worship and administration does not necessarily constitute such a breach. If the true unity of the Church be a unity of fellowship amongst the members of Christ's body, founded on and springing from a unity of faith, it is manifest that nothing that does not rend asunder that fellowship can destroy that unity. Schism, therefore, is not a divergence from uniformity, but a severance of communion. It is not the variety of opinions, but the separation of Christians. There may surely be diversity without discord, difference without alienation. The seamless robe of Christ may be tinged with diverse colours, and yet not rent asunder. There may be a vast amount of essential unity in the midst of outward and circumstantial diversities ; even as, on the other hand, there may be an iron uniformity amid a total want of inward unity. Such diversities may either be or may not be justifiable. They may either turn on matters on which the Word of God has not clearly spoken, or on which its testimony, distinct in itself, has been imperfectly and so variously interpreted. In neither case does the mere diversity constitute a breach of Christian unity ; it does so only when without sufficient ground, it is made the pretext for a severance of fellowship, and so a difference of sentiment issues in a renunciation of communion. There may surely be even serious differences among brethren, and one may feel called on emphatically to remonstrate with and protest

against what he deems wrong in the other, while yet they cease not mutually to own and treat each other as brethren. Such mutual recognition, in word and deed, between Christian and Christian, and between church and church, constitutes the very essence of ecclesiastical communion ; nor can there be any actual schism in the body so long as with the unity of the Spirit this bond of peace is preserved.

What amount of diversity, indeed, in doctrine and discipline, is on scriptural grounds lawfully compatible with the maintenance of ecclesiastical communion, is a different and far more difficult question. That a very considerable amount of such diversity is so compatible, is undeniable, unless indeed we are to accept the Roman principle of a rigid and enforced uniformity ; that again there is and must be a limit to that diversity, if the visible Church is to retain the faintest semblance of essential unity, seems equally manifest. The difficulty here is to draw the line, and fix the point where forbearance should end and uncompromising antagonism begin. In the case, indeed, of fundamental heresy, or scandalous moral corruption, we can easily see that it may be not only justifiable, but obligatory on the part of the Church at large, and every sound and living portion thereof, to cut off the offending member from her fellowship by a formal renunciation of communion. Such an act will correspond in the ecclesiastical world at large to the solemn excision of an unworthy member in the individual congregation. The same principle that requires our withdrawal from every brother that walketh disorderly,

would seem also equally to call for the withdrawal of active fellowship from every community of professing brethren justly chargeable with the same offence. It is to be remembered, however, that such an act is in its nature one of extreme solemnity ; that it is the sternest sentence of condemnation which one professedly Christian body can pronounce against another ; and that in every such case the *onus probandi* lies with a heavy weight of responsibility on the party that deems itself justified in adopting such a course. The entire renunciation of fellowship with any portion of Christ's visible Church is essentially an anathema, and anathemas are things not to be touched save with reverent and trembling hand. It is to be justified only by the strongest grounds—grounds which would equally call for the exclusion of the offending body, temporarily or permanently, from the commonwealth of universal Christendom : when these are wanting, it is schism ; and the guilt of that schism rests not on the party condemned, but on the party who condemns. The total renunciation of communion, in short, like the amputation of a diseased limb in the human body, is the last extreme of ecclesiastical censure ; the deepest brand of reprobation which one professedly Christian society can set upon another ; to be adopted, therefore, only on the gravest reasons, and in the last resort, when every other means of correction have been tried in vain. To resort to it earlier, or on lighter grounds, is surely a high offence against Christian charity, and a criminal, because needless rending asunder of the visible body of Christ.

If a perfect uniformity of outward worship and order, and even articulate profession of the faith, be not essential to the unity of Christian fellowship, so no more is an absolute identity of ecclesiastical organisation. As there may be unity without uniformity, so there may be unity without incorporation. Neither the diversity of forms nor the plurality of denominations necessarily breaks, though it may more or less impair the bond of Christian brotherhood. There may be fellowship, and that most intimate and sacred, between church and church, even as between Christian and Christian. That fellowship may be in all various degrees, from the slightest acts of kindly intercourse to the closest ecclesiastical communion. It may be a mere cordial recognition of each other, or it may be an intimate and constant intercourse, or a common participation and mutual interchange of sacred services, or an active co-operation in the work of Christ; and by such means as these the cords of fraternal sympathy may be drawn indefinitely close, while still distinctive principles are maintained, and denominational arrangements preserved. They may be confederated without being amalgamated—knit in close alliance without being merged each into the other; and in this way also, “we being many,” may be “one body in Christ;” and that not really only, but visibly and conspicuously before all the world. An army is still an army, though it is composed of different divisions, or the contingents of different nations, and moves in separate columns on the battle-field. It cannot be denied, however, that in order to this

end, there is a certain necessary and comparatively narrow limit to such denominational subdivision. A plurality of Christian communities existing side by side in the same country, may be compatible with a certain unity of fellowship and action, but scarcely an unlimited multiplicity. Multitude breeds confusion, and the almost total loss of common understanding and common sympathy. In the blind medley of discordant sects, the very semblance of visible unity disappears; and the one spirit of brotherhood is merged and lost amid the strife of conflicting views and interests. The boundaries of sect, if they do not arrest, yet certainly most materially interrupt the circulation of Christian intercourse and sympathy, and that interruption will be in direct proportion to the multitude of points at which it takes place. They are like so many non-conducting spaces in the line of the electric stream, or breaks in the arterial channels that convey the life-blood from the heart. Hence the flow of the vital current through the whole body becomes feeble, interrupted, broken; and the sense of corporate life and strength for common action in proportion impaired. The smaller the number, therefore, of denominational distinctions, consistent with the free development of individual conviction, the better for the highest interests of Christianity and the Church.

It must be admitted, however, that such a limitation of the denominational principle is practically most difficult. Once admit the lawfulness of separation from the general body of the Church, on the mere ground of special views of doctrine or practice, and it becomes hard

indeed to draw the line where legitimate secession ends and schismatical division begins. Liberty in such a case easily degenerates into licence; and that which in itself is only the necessary condition of our present imperfect state, grows into a rooted and mischievous chronic malady. That separation, which can be justified only on the strongest grounds, comes to be justified almost on any ground, and the last remedy against extreme corruption becomes matter of familiar everyday occurrence. When the paramount obligation of unity, unless where the imperious demands of conscience render it absolutely impossible, is but faintly realised, when the great centripetal force of all-uniting love is in any measure weakened, and when in the decay of vital fervour great central truths lose their commanding prominence, and lesser questions of detail rise into unnatural importance, there is scarcely any difference of opinion or practice which is not thought sufficient to justify, not earnest advocacy only, but the formation of a new communion. Thus a principle is inaugurated which in its tendency leads to utter disorganisation and dissolution. The body ecclesiastical has lost its principle of coherence, and a process of gradual but sure disintegration ensues. Shades of difference without number and without name, which never ought to have been other than diverse views within one united Church, issue in an endless diversity of separate communions, and each successive age yields its fresh harvest of conflicting sects. And thus the solid fabric of visible Christendom, like a rock split up and broken by minute drops of water freezing within its crevices, grad-

ually falls to pieces in a confused and ever-accumulating heap of debris.

How much this has been the case in the history of modern Protestantism, it is unhappily needless to say. Coming at first out of the bosom of the mediæval apostasy, with a marvellous and truly divine unity of faith, of spirit, and even general views of order and discipline, it gave early signs of a deep principle of disorganisation working from within, which in the course of ages has only more and more manifested itself. The liberty of private judgment gradually degenerated into the licence of unlimited separation; difference of opinion, and severance of communion, became mere convertible terms; fragment after fragment, splinter after splinter, was detached from the general mass of Reformed Christendom, till at last, instead of a goodly fellowship of sister churches, little else remains but a chaos of sects. Like the great planet which, according to the speculation of some astronomers, once wheeled its course around the Sun, between the orbits of Jupiter and Mars, it has been disrupted into fragments, and now, instead of one primary and majestic orb, we have only a multitude of feeble telescopic stars. These minute separate bodies, indeed, like the tiny asteroids of our comparison, move substantially in the same direction, revolve in orbits but slightly divergent from each other, and cross each other's paths at every point; but the grand simplicity and stately march of the primeval order is gone.

The practical consequences of this state of things

are as apparent as they are disastrous. The Church's strength is divided; common counsel and common action are precluded; party rivalries and jealousies are engendered, and spread as a subtle solvent through the heart of the social mass; primary truths sink into the shade, and secondary opinions rise into undue and unnatural importance; partial views and half truths spring up everywhere; in the desperation of self-preservation, each sect enormously magnifies its own distinctive profession, and thus there is a general shifting of the centre from the one faith of Christians to some subordinate point; vital force is wasted to a degree quite incalculable in internecine contests; the world, and individual souls, are bewildered amid the confusion, while the great adversary looks on with triumph, and quietly reaps his advantage. In great cities, indeed, where there is abundant room for the development of all, and rival sects may hold on each their separate way, like ships on the high seas, with comparatively little risk of collision, these evils are more partially felt; but in small towns and villages the demon of sectarianism riots uncontrolled. In a community of a few hundred inhabitants there are often nearly as many different sects as there are hundreds of souls. The result is inevitable. Instead of two or three vigorous and flourishing congregations, a whole crowd of feeble sects struggle for existence, and in the keen tenacity of life mutually prey upon each other. In these circumstances, to exalt each their own distinctive tenet into a life-and-death truth, becomes not so much a temptation as almost a necessity. They *are*, in truth, life-and-death

truths to them—touching most vitally the very question of their existence as separate bodies. They *live*, in fact, by the maintenance of those points, and by holding them aloft as the rallying-points of distinctive profession and communion; they are to them the very principle of coherence and corporate existence, without which they would dissolve and fall to pieces. The more insignificant such bodies are in number, the stronger the temptation to swell themselves out into factitious importance by the exaggeration of their principles. The more minute the ground of separation from other bodies, the more vehement the struggle in its behalf; just as in war a barely tenable position is held and maintained by the stronger guard. The nearer rival parties approximate in vital faith and principle, the more bitter often is the antagonism, and the greater the eagerness to prove the difference essential. Thus the fair face of Christianity is deformed by the unsightly exaggeration of its lesser features; the one transcendent name is drowned amid the din of other sounds; brotherly love expires amid the rivalries of faction; denominations eye each other with jealous vigilance, and their union is not so much a cordial alliance as an armed truce; the one faith becomes a chaos of opinions, the one Christian society a hotbed of faction; and the total result is a state of disorganisation and anarchy, only less pernicious than that iron despotism that stifles all free thought, and unites all only by crushing out the life of all.

It is easy, indeed, to see and point out these evils, but it is comparatively difficult to prescribe the remedy. At the same time, the history of the last three hundred

years had been written in vain, did it not afford some lessons fitted to aid the Church in avoiding for the future those rocks on which it has split in the past. There are, as it appears to us, at least two causes of avoidable separation that lie on the very surface. These may be designated respectively as despotism and optimism: the one the besetting sin of church rulers; the other of church members. The one party have enforced too much, the other demanded too much. On the one side, terms of communion have been so multiplied, and points not of doctrine only, but of order, discipline, and worship, so minutely defined and so rigidly enforced, that outraged liberty had no resource but in open rebellion and separation. On the other side, there is a kind of morbid conscientiousness on the part of church members which makes each man feel as if personally responsible, not for his own faith and life only, or even for the general soundness and purity of the communion to which he belongs, but for its absolute conformity in every particular to the standard of the Divine Word. It is not enough for him that in all essential matters of faith and practice it is sound and true, that it exacts no term of Christian communion which his conscience rejects, that he is free to use every means in his power to bring it into entire conformity with what he regards as the perfect Scripture model; he must be satisfied that it actually does in every respect realise that model, or separate from it. He deems himself in conscience bound to connect himself only with a perfect church, and if he find it not in the communion to which he belongs, he

must seek it in another. There is, in his mind, no medium between absolute satisfaction and separation. Accordingly, whenever any particular view is taken on any matter of opinion or practice, which is either not recognised or but imperfectly carried out in any section of the existing church, it is immediately thought necessary to originate a new communion to maintain and embody it, and another fragment or splinter is added to the waste of confusion which has been accumulating from age to age. Thus, while church rulers have often necessitated separation, church members have, perhaps, as often needlessly precipitated it; and both causes together have contributed more, perhaps, than any essential differences of faith or practice to that gradual disintegration of the Reformation Church, which all must alike deplore. Had these two sources of division been throughout avoided — had Christian churches never sought to enforce as terms of communion aught but what was even in their own view vital and essential, and had Christian people never separated but on the ground of such unlawful terms, or of flagrant and intolerable corruption, it is not too much to say that half the schisms that have rent the Protestant Church might have been spared, and half the party names that now baffle and bewilder the ecclesiastical historian never been heard of.

The retrospect is a sad one, and yet we think it is not without its lessons of encouragement as well as of salutary warning. To lay our hand on the root of the disease is, in very many cases, more than half the cure;

and, in the present instance, we believe it will be found on a close examination of the malady at work that the remedy is not only possible, but that it is already begun. The disease, we believe, has already passed its worst. Both the morbid tendencies in question have in the main run their course, and exercise daily a less and less influence over the Christian community generally. There is neither in our day the same disposition on the part of rulers to enforce needless terms of communion, nor of the people to separate on every light pretence. The time has gone by when an absolute agreement on every minute point of doctrine, discipline, order, and even views of political and ecclesiastical history, could be prescribed as an essential condition of admission to the sacramental table, or when a separate religious body could be founded on a peculiar view taken of an extinct burgess oath. The tendency of our age is more and more to subordinate lesser differences to fundamental principles, to distinguish between matters of opinion and matters of faith, between special views and catholic verities, between points simply deserving of a more or less earnest advocacy, and points that would justify separation; and, as the consequence of this, the smaller bodies, resting upon a narrow foundation of distinctive principle, are gradually either dying out or coalescing with the larger. This, indeed, may be regarded by some as an evil—as only one out of many tokens of the downward tendency of the age; there are those who shrink from the very name of forbearance in regard to any one matter great or small, as only another name for

latitudinarian compromise, and can conceive of no other way of witnessing in behalf of any truth, but in entire ecclesiastical separation from those who impugn it : at all events, however, there can be no doubt whatever of the fact. The principle of vitality in such small communities becomes daily less and less ; in the larger sections of Protestant Christendom, greater. Everything tends towards consolidation and concentration—to the drawing together the broken strength and closing in the lines of the great evangelic army. Diverse divisions and distinctive banners there doubtless will still be, but the broken and straggling *groupes* that now encumber the field will, we may hope, gradually disappear. It may be long, indeed, before the evangelical Church in Europe and America present before the eyes of the world, and in the face of the enemy, that orderly and compact array which the exigencies of the times so urgently require, but yet we do not despair of seeing ere long a nearer approximation to it than has been witnessed for more than two hundred years. The denominational distinctions of Protestant Christendom, if we lay out of account those minute sections already referred to, and whose period of vigorous life has run its course, reduced themselves mainly to three—the Episcopal, the Presbyterian, and the Congregational.* These will, doubtless, still

* It may be thought that so large and powerful a body as the Wesleyan Methodists ought to have found a place in this analysis. But we cannot help regarding the constitution of that body, originating, as it did, in a mere society within the Episcopal communion, and still retaining in its separate church capacity the organisation proper to its original character, as an anomalous one, and destined to undergo, sooner or later, most impor-

for long survive. They each present a phase of ecclesiastical organisation and life so broadly marked and distinct, and have struck their roots so deep into the soil of Protestant Christendom, that they may be expected, it may be for many generations, to hold their ground, and to flourish side by side; but it does not appear hopeless that the limits of denominational variety might be confined more and more to these. Were this hope realised, and were the cords of fraternal amity between the true-hearted throughout the entire Christian commonwealth drawn progressively closer, we should then be disposed ourselves to wait with comparative patience for the attainment of that more perfect unity of faith and fellowship which may be reserved for a future day.

Meanwhile, the existence, to a certain extent, of separate communions, if fraught with many evils, and the result more or less of sin, may not be without its large amount of attendant good. It is probable that each of the great sections of catholic Christendom has much to teach as well as much to learn from the rest, before it could be safely blotted out of the Christian world, and simply merged into one or other of the rival systems. Much as we value our own distinctive platform, and thoroughly as we accept it as founded on, and agreeable to, the Word of God, we should be bold indeed, did we claim for it or for any other, *as actually realised*, an absolute perfection as a complete embodiment of the

tant modifications. In that case its principles and methods of administration will probably become assimilated more or less closely to some one or other of the leading types of ecclesiastical polity above defined. In America this is already in large measure the case.

divine ideal of the visible Church. There may be much, we can well believe, in the experience and life even of communions widely separated from our own, and whose constitution we may regard as most defective, that is worthy both of our admiration and imitation. If the sister Churches have their besetting sins, they have also, doubtless, their distinctive graces; and it is time, perhaps, to consider seriously whether their intercourse might not with advantage lie somewhat in mutual appreciation as well as in mutual protest. This will appear the more probable, if we consider the widely different standing-grounds occupied respectively by the three great Protestant denominations.

The Episcopal Church is the representative, among Reformed Churches, of the past. She is the continuation into Protestant times of the spirit and traditions and general church life of ante-Reformation times. She went upon the principle of conserving what was good, as well as rejecting what was evil, in the existing system, and generally holding that to be good which could not be clearly proved to be bad. Like an old feudal castle repaired and adapted for modern use, or one of those solemn piles built in other days, but which now resound to the voice of her common prayer, she is not a new Church, but literally and strictly a reform of the old. In her the spirit of Cyprian and of Ambrose blends with that of Latimer and Cranmer—the old Nicene theology with the *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*. Such a plan of reform had its advantages and its disadvantages. If it was less searching, it was perhaps also less one-sided.

If some things were preserved which it had been well for her to have utterly extirpated, and the toleration of which has been to her a root of bitterness ever since, there are probably other elements of the old church life preserved in her which the Protestant Church at large would not willingly let die. With the preservation of outward historic continuity, she has a more intimate inward communion than other Protestant bodies with the Church of the preceding ages; and accordingly, whatever, in the distinctive spirit of those ages, was of enduring value for all times, finds the most congenial home within her pale. She is, in short, at once patristic and Calvinistic, Catholic and Protestant; not of the sixteenth century only, but of that and all the rest that went before. In fine, the stately order of her service, its deep devotional cast, the rich freedom of her sacred psalmody, the simplicity and brevity of her creeds, the prominence throughout all her services of the great incarnation mystery, and the living personal Christ, her sound and sober ethical spirit,—all present features which other reformed communions may study with advantage, with the view of considering not only what they may teach, but what also they may learn.

The Presbyterian Church, again, is the birth of the Reformation age. It is mainly the simple embodiment of its distinctive spirit, distinctive doctrines, and distinctive principles. Clearing the ground alike of the accumulated rubbish of the past, and the stately pillars and arches of the old edifice, it set to work, with the Bible in hand, to rear afresh the fabric of the house of

God. It is distinctly a new structure, not a modification of the old ; like a modest, but substantial and commodious Elizabethan mansion rising up beside the ruined and mouldering feudal castle. And what her founders then made her she still substantially remains. . . . Her creed is that of Augsburg and Geneva ; her constitution, with the exception of one single point, that which the great body of the reformed divines made, or would have made her ; and her great theme is the unchanged note of that mighty article which, after the torpor of a thousand years, new-created the Church, and breathed fresh life into the world. If she has her faults, they are those chiefly of defect. The creation of one great epoch, she may bear perhaps the stamp of that epoch somewhat too exclusively. There may be a danger of losing the Catholic in the Protestant, the church of all times in the church of the last three centuries. Certain it is, that with many Presbyterians, theology simply means the doctrinal systems of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ; church history, the record of events from the Reformation downwards. Their Christian fathers are Calvin and Knox, and in the perspective of ages, *their* forms seem to touch and blend with those of Paul and John, almost as if the intervening fifteen centuries had never existed. Hence a certain narrowness alike of Christian doctrine and of Christian sympathy. In one point, however, the churches of the Presbyterian model stand pre-eminent. In that marvellous power of concentrated action which her representative system supplies, and which drew the homage even of the sceptic Hume,

as the most perfect ideal of deliberative and administrative government, she forms a model to the whole Christian world, realising in actual fact, that theory of synodical action to which the Episcopal churches are only feeling their way, and of which the Congregational bodies are more and more recognising the need, with but faint and distant hopes of seeing the desideratum supplied.

In most respects, the Congregational churches* are the direct counterpart of the Episcopal. The one rests on the past, the other on the present. The one gives prominence to the ministry, the other to the congregation. The master principle of the one is order, of the other freedom. The one is strong as an institution, the other as a people. The Episcopal Church is the episcopate, the liturgy, her solemn forms and sanctuaries of worship, together, of course, with the Christian flock within her pale. The Congregational is the last, and the last only. It belongs, in short, emphatically to the current age. It mingles with the existing movement of the time, and is a part of it. If it helps to mould, it is also largely moulded by it. With few traditions of the past, with no fixed forms of worship or standards of faith, with no solid structure of positive institutions, her character in any age is simply what the existing state of doctrine and life in her congregations makes her. Generally, as compared with the Episcopal, and even the Presbyterian Church, she bears more or less the stamp of modernness ;

* Under this general title we of course include both the Baptist and Pædobaptist sections of the great Congregational body.

her prevailing views and tendencies are more of to-day, and if there be anything that is stirring and progressive in the spirit of the time, whether for good or for evil, she is, perhaps, more in the way of catching it. In her the *vox populi*, subject of course to the Divine Word, is the *vox Dei*, and whatever that oracle declares, is for the moment at once her confession of faith and standard of authority. She, too, has her own peculiar point of strength. This lies in her congregational life. If there be one thing more than another characteristic of the Apostolic Church, it is the intensity of common life, and the rich development of individual activity in her congregations; and this element has been perhaps more completely preserved and carried out in this denomination than in either of the rival communions. Her churches are real *bonâ fide* societies of Christian men and women, knit together in a sacred fellowship of life and love, not mere gatherings of people attending the same place of worship and professing the same creed; and thus she is specially strong in that very point in which the Episcopal communion, and in some degree also the Presbyterian churches, hitherto have been weakest. Thus, as it appears to us, each of the great sections of Reformed Christendom, however in other respects defective or erroneous, has its own distinctive point of excellence, its special element of strength, in which it may be at once a pattern and incitement to the others. Neither one nor other of them as actually existing is complete without the others—is a full realisation of the mind of God in regard to His visible Church.

Truth, as it exists in the Eternal Mind, is one and indivisible ; as it exists among men, more or less broken and scattered. . . .

Meanwhile, let none deem that they have already attained, either are already perfect ; let each be quick to learn, as well as faithful to protest and warn ; and whereto we have already attained, "let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

Our rapidly-lessening space will preclude our entering at any length on the third branch of our theme—the UNITY OF LIFE. Here, too, the Roman falsehood is not so much a simple figment as a perversion of the truth. All spiritual life, she says, is in the Church. In her is salvation, out of her perdition. She is the one body of Christ, wherein dwells the fulness of the quickening Spirit, to be severed from which, therefore, is death. "There is one body and one Spirit," and that one Spirit dwells alone in that one body. Christ dwells in the body as a whole, not in the separate members ; in the temple, not in the individual stones by themselves and apart from each other. Each branch lives in the tree, and all receive the vital sap through one stem, from one hidden fountain. No more, then, can a soul live apart from the Church, than an amputated limb or severed branch apart from the living organism of which it forms a part. Not only is this true of the invisible Church, or true mystical body of Christ, but, in a sense also, even of the outward fellowship of professing Christians. If grace comes at first to the individual

soul direct from heaven, and is sustained and renewed evermore by immediate personal communion with Christ the Head, yet it is no less true that it lives, grows, and matures best, not in isolation, but in fellowship with the living body. Christianity is a social religion, and the life of the individual member is intimately linked with the common life of all. As coal kindles coal on the hearth, so heart kindles heart, spirit kindles spirit, sympathy kindles sympathy in the living fellowship of quickened souls in Christ.

So far all is plain and clear, and is in substance admitted alike on either side. All life comes from Christ; all life resides and effectually works within the Church. It comes from the heart; it pulses through the body. But here comes the essential point of difference between the two systems, according to which the same identical proposition becomes either a life-giving truth or a soul-killing falsehood. What *is* the Church—the one body in which resides the one spirit? It is the Roman hierarchy, says the one system; It is the congregation of Christ's faithful people, says the other. Wherever there is a priest and an altar in communion with the holy apostolic see, there is Christ, says Rome. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I," says Christ himself, and the evangelic Church after Him in every age. In the one scheme the Church is a mystical instrument, in the other a living society; in the one a dispenser of grace, in the other a subject of it. In all Roman and semi-Roman teaching, in short, the

Church is a vast, mysterious, and awful power, above the soul, and external to it, before which it suppliant bends, as the sovereign mistress of its faith, and arbiter of life and death ; in the biblical and Reformation creed, it is a free community of brethren. Widely divergent, however, as the two systems thus are in their practical results and tendencies, in one respect they both alike point in one direction. The Protestant doctrine as we have now explained it, equally with the Roman, enforces the importance of Christian union, and the pernicious consequences of unnecessary separation in the body. Though grace reside not in sacramental charms, but in the divine communion of quickened souls in Christ, yet none the less is it in the body and inseparable from it. If Christ dwells in His people, not as isolated units, but as a holy society and brotherhood united together in Him ; if the peculiar life of Christianity be in its very nature corporate and social ; if member be knit to member in deepest sympathies, and the sacred influences circulate, as in a mysterious electric circle, from heart to heart, then is it manifest how much the essential vitality and fervour of each member must depend on that of the whole body, and on his own intimate union and communion with it. Whatever, then, interrupts or impairs that communion, is more or less detrimental to life. Monachism and sectarianism—the individualism of the cloister and the individualism of the conventicle—are alike suicidal. The fellowship of love is the very native air of Christianity,

apart from which it pines and dies. No more can an individual Christian separate himself from his brethren, or one sect renounce the communion of universal Christendom, and yet maintain the life of grace unimpaired, than an isolated ember, thrown off from the glowing hearth, can retain its fire. Indeed, it would seem as if, other things being equal, the intensity of corporate life and energy in Christian communities were almost in direct proportion to their numerical strength. It is greater, *cæteris paribus*, in a large congregation than in a feeble one; it is greater in a large and growing denomination than in a minute sect. As in a great city, as compared with an obscure village or country town, the social heart in such a body beats more strongly. There is greater force and impetus in everything; greater life and freedom; everywhere a more intense fermentation of thought, feeling, action. Men's views are larger, their aims are loftier, their spirit rises higher. They devise more liberal things, and attempt greater things. They are less occupied with paltry trifles, more with great essential principles. As their position is more commanding, so their horizon is more extended, and their sympathies with everything that is good and noble throughout the catholic world more intimate. If in such a body the fervour of spiritual life, and the tone of Christian doctrine, for a season decline, the whole past history of the Church encourages the hope of an after revival and renovation; whereas small branch churches and fragmentary sects usually have their day of vigorous

life, and then finally expire. Their very isolation, and the necessity they are under of living on secondary rather than on fundamental principles, kills them. So was it with Donatism, Novatianism, and other earnest but one-sided sects in early times; so is it with similar fragments of the Reformation Church at this hour. The great fire of catholic Christianity burns on for ever, while the scattered embers die; the broad stream rolls on majestically in an ever-widening channel, while partial side-currents lose themselves in idle eddies or in stagnant pools.

The general result, then, of all is plain. Unity is strength, unity is life, unity is ardour, activity, courage, incitement, hope. Isolation is only weakness, decrepitude, and death. The very essence of the Church lies in its fellowship, and it concerns nothing less than its life to preserve that fellowship unbroken, and more and more to cement, strengthen, extend it. For this end everything must be sacrificed—*everything but truth*; and even truth itself, though it may never be compromised, may yet be subordinated to truth higher and broader than itself. Let us unite wherever union is with a safe conscience possible, and so far as it is possible; let us separate only at the imperative call of sacred principles, to be preserved inviolate by no other means. Amid the diversity of our separate communions, let the bright stately image of the one Church throughout all the world live within our hearts, and draw us ever in intense and intenser longings toward the eternal centre of perfect truth and love. Thus we being many shall be even now

one body in Christ; and drawing our lines and combining our scattered strength, be the better prepared for that great combat for the very foundations of the faith, which is assuredly coming, and is even now in part begun.

OXFORD AND ROME.

THE true spring of the English Reformation, and of whatever was new and distinctive in the religious life of the Church and nation since that time, was the Word of God. As at Wittemberg, as at Zurich, as at Geneva, as at St Andrews, so was it emphatically here. The Bible reopened wide before the world, and re-enthroned within the Church of God—that was the grand distinctive work of the men of that age, and their priceless legacy to all succeeding times. This was the one fulcrum on which rested the mighty lever that heaved the whole mediæval world from its foundations—this the trumpet-blast, at whose voice whole nations awoke and gathered together for a holy war, “because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness.” It was the old seed of the eternal Word that was sown again broadcast over the world, and sprang up over many lands in a fresh harvest of Pentecostal life and power. The English Reformation—like every other true reformation, whether in individual souls or in nations and churches at large—was no mere organic change, hatched in cabinets or shaped in conclaves of bishops and doctors, but a living fire kindled in men’s hearts

by the same hand which sixteen centuries before had sent "fire upon the earth."

It is of the utmost importance to keep this fact distinctly in view in every question which concerns the history, the principles, and the destinies of the Reformed Church of England. Thus alone can we understand its true genius, and the real source of its strength. We must remember that in its real essence and living spirit, it was not an institution, but a birth; and that not as one that should spring, Minerva-like, full-grown and full-armed, from the brain of a Henry or a Cranmer, but "begotten" within the womb of earnest hearts by the incorruptible Word of God. In point of fact, the movement was not only in its sources deeper, but in its date far anterior to those personal interests and political exigencies to which the malice of adversaries has striven to trace its origin. Latimer is already thundering forth his thrilling sermons from his pulpit at Cambridge; Bilney is already poring in secret over the sacred page, or flits from house to house on errands of mercy amid the poor of the gospel flock; already are Protestant martyrs rotting in Oxford dungeons; already is John Tyndale skulking in foreign cities, and fleeing from town to town with the half-printed sheets of his English Bible; already are bales of Bibles and Testaments arriving contraband at the harbour of the Thames, and eagerly bought up, passed from hand to hand, and devoured by greedy thousands;—thus already is the holy fire kindled, and is spreading far and wide,—years before the name of Cranmer had been heard in history,

and while Henry VIII. still holds his place as the foremost champion of the Papal system. Henry, in short, for his own ends, *availed himself* of the Reformation spirit, not *created it*; and Cranmer and his coadjutors (a noble task in its place, but still not the highest) only gave form, and shape, and authoritative sanction to a principle which already existed as a living and triumphant power in the land, and which, with them or against them, must have still gone on conquering and to conquer.

Thus emphatically true it is that the Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants. The Bible, speaking directly home to the individual heart and soul, and interpreted and applied by the living Spirit of God—the Bible, the one test of truth, the one source of authority, the one spring of spiritual life and health—the Bible, the one oracle of the living God, and mightiest instrument of His grace—that was the new wine which everywhere burst the old bottles of traditional forms and dogmas, and which demanded the creation of new institutions to receive and conserve it for the use of all succeeding time.

This the Reformers in a great measure accomplished. Besides clearly enunciating in public deeds and formularies the principle of the sole authority of the Word of God, they endeavoured so to remodel the outward framework of the Church as to give free scope to its operation. Whatever was manifestly contrary to its dictates, or palpably antagonistic to its spirit, they unsparingly removed. Here, however, they paused. In all

other respects things were permitted to remain in great measure as they were. Unlike our Scottish Reformers, who with axe and mattock fairly cleared the ground, and dug their foundation anew for their new structure, our mitred and surpliced neighbours of the south were content to build on the old foundation, and work according to the old model; or rather, they left the shell of the old edifice standing, and only remodelled and refitted it as they thought best for the new inmate it was to receive, and the new purpose to which it was to be applied.

We are not undervaluing the work of the English Reformers. On the contrary, no one who remembers the state of things as they found them, and that in which they left them, and who takes into account the circumstances in which they did their work, can deny them the praise of having executed their task with a firm and an earnest hand. Let any one compare the Latin matins and vespers of the old ritual with the vernacular morning and evening service; still more the pompous mass, with its endless bowings, crossings, genuflexions, kissings, turnings, unintelligible mutterings, and meaningless dumb-show, with the simple and scriptural majesty of the communion office; and let him call to mind the circumstances in which these men had to work, under the influence of old prejudices, a despotic court, and a divided people, and his wonder will be, not that they accomplished so little, but that they accomplished so much. Still the general contour and framework of the body ecclesiastical remained in many respects unchanged. Though no

true Romish devotee could have beheld that new temple without tears, yet there was much about it to remind him of former days. The episcopal and archiepiscopal thrones of the old sees; the majestic minsters and abbey churches of the old worship; the white-robed bands of prebendaries, canons, and youthful choristers, chanting as of old their matins and even-song; the Kyrie Eleisons, the litany, and the chanted psalm; the stone font and the altar rail; the glories of the stained window, and the pealing anthem; the feasts and fasts, and solemn commemorative days,—in all this, albeit animated by another spirit and counterbalanced by other elements, there was much to revive in imaginative and susceptible minds the faint image at least of the gorgeous system that had passed away, and make men feel that the England of Edward and Elizabeth, all changed as it was, was still the England of Henry VII. and VIII.

These things, indeed, occupy not now the place they did before. They form not now the essence and substance of the national religion. They are recognised and treated as the dress and drapery, not the living body of the Church. Still they are there—there in palpable form and presence. They stand forth before the eye as the marked features that go to constitute the distinctive visage of the Reformed English Church, and must continue to modify more or less the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and religious life of her members in successive generations. In short, from that moment and ever since, there have been two principles continually present and at work within the bosom of the Epis-

copal communion, and more or less acting and reacting on one another. The one is the *Biblical*, the other the *Ecclesiastical*—the one the *Evangelical*, the other the *Traditional*—the one magnifying the Gospel, the other magnifying the Church; the one the glorious birth of the Reformation age, the other the inheritance of the ages of the past. The former is the spring of the Low-Church tendency in all its forms, the latter of the High-Church element of every shade and degree.

We have now laid our hand on what we regard as the key to the whole question which forms the subject of the present paper. The two principles which we have now mentioned as so prominently marked in the constitution and working of the Church of England, are in truth more or less present and operative in every religious society. In every ecclesiastical community the religious life of the individual member is necessarily influenced on the one hand by the authority of the Word on his own heart and conscience, and on the other by the character of the body to which he belongs—its forms of worship, its distinctive spirit, its traditional opinions and principles. While we fully believe that an earnest soul might, through the sole guidance of the Word and Spirit of God, feel its way to the cross, and thence to heaven; yet practically this is not the customary way of our education for eternity. The Church is a flock, not a multitude of isolated units; and, accordingly, however much broken into separate sections, its individual members do not, and cannot, travel on separately one by one, but in groups and companies.

Thus every one, however much he may magnify the supreme authority of the Word, and seek in all things to know and follow its dictates, does at the same time lean more or less upon his brethren, and the particular body to which he belongs. He is what he is, partly by what the Word and Spirit of God has made him, and partly by the influence which his own particular church system or denomination has had upon him;—that is to say, the *Biblical* and *Ecclesiastical* principles have been both present and unitedly operative in moulding the particular form in which Christianity embodies itself in his case. The great and vital question here is, as to the degree in which these two principles are severally operative; which of the two constitutes, in a man's convictions and feelings, the dominant and controlling authority; to which he turns his eye as the tribunal of last appeal in adjusting his faith and guiding his practice; whether, in short, the Bible, speaking to the individual conscience through the power of the Spirit, is made to judge and control the Church, or whether the Church, by its dogmatic decisions and traditionary beliefs, is made to interpret and control the Bible. In the one case, we believe and act because God has in His Word declared and commanded; in the other, because the Church has authoritatively defined the dogmata of our belief and the rules of our practice. Both principles, indeed, as we have seen, may and will exercise an influence over us; but one or other must in the nature of things be supreme. In the last resort we *must* either try the Church by the Bible, or interpret the Bible by

the Church. On the one side is Protestant truth and liberty; on the other, all Roman and Romanising error. The one is private judgment—the other is authority. There may be many shades and degrees between the two principles carried out to their full and logical extent; but this is the border line that divides the two regions from one another—the tropical circle, so to speak, which separates the torrid clime of despotic power and rankly-growing superstition from the temperate region of robust freedom, spiritual independence, and rational faith.

Let us now at once illustrate and apply this principle, by a brief examination of the leading points which enter into the great controversy between Anglicans or Anglo-Catholics and Romanists or Roman Catholics. The points we shall select are these three—**THE TEST OF TRUTH, THE PRINCIPLE OF UNITY, and SACRAMENTAL GRACE.** These will be allowed, by every one qualified to pronounce a judgment on the matter, to be the cardinal points on which the whole issue may be said to turn; and we shall be able, we think, demonstratively to show that in regard to each of these there is no tenable middle ground between the full and loyal adoption of the Biblical principle of Protestantism on the one hand, and the Roman doctrine and claims of authority on the other.

1. As to the **TEST OF TRUTH.** We prefer this expression to other terms in general use in connection with this question, as “Rule of Faith,” “Standard of Truth,” &c., as indicating more simply the precise point of our

present inquiry—namely, What is the *final authority* for regulating the belief and practice of the individual Christian man? The Protestant answer to this question is direct and clear. “The Word of God,” he maintains, “which is contained in the Scriptures, is the only rule to direct us what we ought to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.” The voice of God speaking *in* the Word, *by* the Spirit, *to* the conscience and heart—that is the one and all-sufficient oracle for deciding every question of faith and law of duty. With him one sentence of the Word outweighs all the decisions of Fathers and Councils; one divine command, the canons and traditions of a thousand years. “Search the Scriptures,” and by them “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good”—that is his call to all men of every rank and degree. “To the law and to the testimony”—that is his appeal in every question of faith and duty, and by that one issue he is prepared to stand or fall. This is not inconsistent with the due influence of the Church in the moulding of our individual views and convictions. The principle of private judgment not only admits, but demands, the earnest use of all the subordinate means within our reach for helping to the fuller and deeper understanding of the mind of God in His Word. At this point, and for this purpose, the voice of the universal Church does come legitimately in, and will be seriously weighed and taken into account by every sincere searcher after truth. The decisions of doctors, the definitions of councils, the solemn confessions of churches, the utterances of Christian experience

and of the profoundest convictions of holy men of every age and country, the instructions of parents, teachers, pastors, and eminent men of God of our own time—in short, the sublime consensus of all times and of all lands in certain great fundamental verities of Christian faith and life, which, *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus*, have been believed, proclaimed, lived on, died on, by heaven-anointed souls,—*this* voice of the Church doubtless may be a blessed means of leading the individual man to the knowledge of the truth revealed in the Word, and confirming him in it when found. Such subsidiary means form valuable corroborations to our faith, and serve as a salutary ballast to the levity of individual speculation. They are our servants, not our masters; our helps, not our authority. They may stand as buttresses and outworks to the living temple of truth that is built up within the soul; but the structure itself must still repose on its own foundation—even the immovable rock of God's eternal Word.

But with this basis of faith, this test of truth, both Romanism and Anglicanism are dissatisfied. Both alike proclaim their conviction of its utter inadequacy as an infallible guide of faith and duty. Both avowedly base their system on this fundamental principle, that the Bible is *not* the only authoritative test of truth. Both thus arrest *in limine* all issue with Protestants on individual points of doctrine, by an appeal from this tribunal to another. Another step further both parties—the Roman Catholic and the Anglo-Catholic—proceed in common. Both agree in joining tradition with Scripture,

and regarding both as forming together the "Rule of Faith." There are, indeed, subordinate differences of view between them on this point. Most Anglicans, for example, will assign to tradition only an *interpretative* authority; while the Romanist claims for it a place entirely equal and co-ordinate with the written Word of God. Both, however, alike maintain its plenary authority, as a source of divine truth, and its absolute necessity along with the Bible as a guide to the faith.

But here a vital question arises, and urgently calls for a solution. How is this rule of faith thus constituted to be made available for the guidance of the individual conscience? How am I to reach its decisions, that I may guide myself by its light? Where are those decisions recorded, how authenticated and proved? Amid the countless floating opinions and traditionary dogmas of eighteen centuries, who shall guide the bewildered inquirer to those which are unquestionably apostolic, divine, authoritative? Put the Bible into my hand, and bid me guide my course by those unerring dictates which on all fundamental points are so plain that he that runneth may read, and I understand what you mean, and bless God for the priceless boon; but to steer my hapless bark, without pilot or compass, over the wide trackless sea of fathers, doctors, councils, decretals, and contradictory decisions, that surely is a task too great for man. The inference is manifest and inevitable. There must be a living, authoritative guide. The adoption of such a rule of faith, from the very nature of the case, plainly demands this. Accordingly, one step further the Anglican and the

Romanist still take in common. They both maintain the necessity of an authority. The Anglican, founding upon a single fragmentary clause of the Thirty-nine Articles—a clause of which the authenticity is more than questionable—claims for his Church the same power authoritatively to define and teach the faith to her members, which Rome in bolder and louder accents challenges as her own.

But here at last comes the decisive and mortal issue between the two systems. Where is this authoritative guide to be found? Where is the seat where this awful power sits enthroned? What the organ through which it utters its voice to mortal men? How may I personally reach its divine, infallible decisions? Such questions as these manifestly demand a solution. When called to renounce our private judgment, and the sole guidance of the Word and Spirit of God, it surely concerns us, above all things, and before we take a single further step, to know what and where that other tribunal is before which we are to bend our soul, and whose voice we are to obey as the infallible oracle of truth. Whatever that tribunal may be, this much, at least, is clear in regard to it—it must be *one*; it must have some recognised organ through which it speaks; it must be accessible to all; it must stand out, marked by certain grand characteristics, as a power entirely peculiar and alone upon the earth; it must, in fine, exist through all time and speak to men of all time.

Where is there such a tribunal? Can the Anglican point out such a one—one possessing even the faintest semblance of a claim to such a character? Is it the

bishop? Then the bishop of one diocese contradicts that of another. Is it the prayer-book? That of itself needs an interpreter—an authoritative umpire in those endless controversies of which it has been the battleground. Is it a synod—a general convocation of the whole national Church? Then other national churches must have the same right; and so we shall have one law for Canterbury, another for Rome, another for Constantinople. Is it a general council of the whole Church—the collective decision of universal Christendom in holy synod assembled, as at Nice, Constantinople, Chalcedon? Such a synod has not met for a thousand years, nor is there the faintest prospect of any such assembling for ages more. And if it should, who is to decide who they are that shall be summoned to it, and admitted to a voice in its decisions? Amid the mutual anathemas of Rome, Greece, and England, who shall authoritatively adjust the roll of the holy fathers on whose solemn sentence is to hang the faith of the world? And is the universal Church of God meanwhile without a guide? Is the heavenly oracle silent? and are men left the while—left for ages—to grope their way in darkness, amid the blind medley of rival churches and rival creeds? Is it for such a guide as this that we are called to renounce the true light of the eternal Word, and the promised guidance of the eternal Spirit? Shall we be thus content to close our eyes and hold out our hand to the first pretender who comes, under some high-sounding name of authority, to demand our faith? But enough—the thing is through and through preposterous.

The whole theory vanishes at the touch, like a spider's web. There *is* no such authoritative guide as this system, as its first principle, demands. It has no existence beneath the sun, either in history or in fact,—unless indeed you are content to seek it—where some have been in sheer logical necessity driven—in that stupendous and mysterious power that sits enthroned on the seven hills, and which, with all the confidence of an assured infallibility, launches forth its high decrees, and, on pain of anathemas and eternal perdition, demands the implicit faith of the entire Christian world.

On this point Dr Wiseman and his coadjutors press their argument with crushing effect on the feeble position of their antagonists. For ourselves we cannot see the faintest possibility of an escape for them from the plain alternative of either retiring from that position or surrendering at discretion to the enemy. The doctrine and theory of an authority without an actual living authority, may serve as an ideal to amuse the visionary dreamer, but cannot meet the exigencies of really awake and earnest men. Well and irresistibly does Dr Newman make his appeal to his old followers, in these terribly graphic words:—

“The idea, then, of these so-called Anglo-Catholic divines was simply and absolutely submission to an external authority; to it they appealed, to it they betook themselves; there they found a haven of rest; thence they looked out upon the troubled surge of human opinion, and upon the crazy vessels which were labouring without chart or compass upon it. Judge, then, of their dismay when, according to the Arabian tale, on their striking their anchors into the supposed soil, lighting their fires on it, and fixing on it the poles of their tents, suddenly their island began to move, to heave,

to splash, to frisk to and fro, to dive, and at last to swim away spouting out inhospitable jets of water upon the credulous mariners who had made it their home." *

Thus at length is the dream dispelled—the dream of a tenable middle ground between the simple supremacy of the Word and the supremacy of the Pope :—

"Thus it is that students of the fathers, antiquarians, and poets began by assuming that the body to which they belong is that of which they read in times past, and then *proceed to describe it with that majesty and beauty of which history tells, or which their genius creates.* Nor is it an easy process or a light effort by which their minds are disabused of this error. It is an error for many reasons too dear to them to be readily relinquished. But at length either the force of circumstances or some unexpected accident dissipates it; and as in fairy tales the magic castle vanishes when the spell is broken, and nothing is seen but the wild heath, the barren rock, and the forlorn sheep-walk, so is it with us as regards the Church of England, when we look in amazement on that we thought so unearthly, and find so commonplace or worthless." †

We need not say how easily these eloquently vivid words might be retorted on Dr Newman himself, to break the spell of that more gorgeous, imposing, and consistently compacted system which now forms the object of his blind idolatry, but which is at bottom equally hollow, false, and baseless. But that is not our present task. Meanwhile we turn away from these vain janglings to cling with a firmer grasp than ever to that one eternal rock of truth laid in Zion—"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the

* Lectures to Anglicans, p. 124.

† Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

2. In regard to the UNITY OF THE CHURCH, there is a certain length to which all parties alike, Protestants, Anglicans, and Romanists, are agreed. That there is but one true Church of God upon the earth; that that Church is in itself one and indivisible; that to that Church every genuine Christian must belong; that the treasures of Divine grace are centred there; and that there is no ordinary possibility of salvation out of it,—is the doctrine alike of all who believe that there is no name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus, and that those whom He saves are called out of this world as a peculiar people unto Himself. As there is but one Shepherd, so there is but one flock and one sheepfold. In this sense we can all cordially confess, in the language of the Nicene creed, "We believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church." But what is the nature of this unity? What is the bond that connects individual souls with the one Church, and which, taking hold alike of all, binds them together in one indivisible mystical body? Is it an *outward and visible* unity, or an *inward and spiritual*? A unity of organisation, or a unity of life? A unity, in short, which all men may see, and which exhibits itself in such plain and palpable characteristics as government, discipline, forms of worship, and symbols of belief? or a unity unseen and unearthly, manifesting itself indeed in its effects, but in itself cognisable by God the All-

seeing alone? On this question, we believe, hangs the whole issue, so far as regards the matter of unity, between the Protestant and the Papal system. Adopt the former view, and you have already adopted the fundamental principle of the Papacy, and require only to carry your convictions thoroughly out to land you full in the arms of Rome; lay fast hold of the latter, and impreguably establish it in the light of God's Word, and you have a lever in your hand by which you may heave up the whole fabric of spiritual despotism from the foundation. Let it be clearly noted here, that the unity we now speak of is not that union which is *desirable* among the different members of the one Church of Christ, and which is destined, doubtless, more and more to issue in an outward harmony of profession and practice, and even administration; but that *unity* which is *essential* to the being of the Church—which forms its very constitutive principle, whereby alone it is one body. In plain language, is an *outward, visible, organic* unity essential to the being of the true Church of Christ, or is it not? And in order to be a member of the Church, must I be connected, and in active communion, with such a visible, outward organisation, recognised and received as the one true Church and kingdom of Christ on earth? On this hinge, we repeat, the whole controversy on this momentous point between Protestants and Romanists turns.

The Anglicans fully symbolise with Romanists in adopting the former view as a fundamental principle of their system, and repudiating the antagonist position of the Protestant creed. From the first they held forth

the Church as essentially a visible kingdom, held together by a visible principle of unity, and reprobated at once the name and idea of an invisible Church as a baseless figment of ultra-Protestant sectarianism. With them, the true Church, wherever found, must stand forth before men's eyes as one body, marked by certain plain and palpable characteristics or notes, and circumscribed within certain distinct and assignable lines of demarcation. In principle, then, Anglicans and Romanists are entirely at one in regard to this point. Both have formed identically the same idea of the true Church, and the only question that remains is as to where and in whom that idea is actually realised. *Where* the true Church is, remains at issue between them; but *what* she is, and by what great characteristic features to be recognised, is agreed on the part of all.'

The question between them thus lies within very narrow limits, and admits, we are persuaded, but of too easy a solution. It is entirely a question of history and of fact. We have only to look abroad over the wide field of professing Christendom, and with this august image of a grand and universal visible unity in our mind, seek out, amid the innumerable forms of belief and profession which occupy the ground, for that one body which bears the greatest appearance of fully realising it? Where is she? Where, in the actual state of things now existing in the world, and which has existed for centuries, is that body, which, herself claiming to be the one only Church of God on earth, is spread over all the world, and yet is everywhere, visibly and organically, one and indivisible?

Is it the Church of England, together with those other sister communions at home or abroad, that are essentially one with her in doctrine, discipline, and communion? No sane man ever dreamt of putting forth such a claim.

Or is it the whole commonwealth of reformed churches holding the essentials of the faith, and more or less pure and apostolical in their outward order and discipline? Such a notion every Anglican would reject with instant and unmitigated scorn!

What then? Is it the collective body of churches episcopally constituted, and possessing, or claiming to possess, the grace of lineal succession from apostolical times?—the Anglican, the American, the Gallican, the Roman, the Greek, the Abyssinian, the Arminian, together with those other numerous fragments of ancient Christianity that lie scattered, as the bleached remains of once living churches, over the whole Oriental world? This is, in fact, the Anglican position—the only theory on which they can pretend to hold out to the world any actual embodiment of the doctrine which on this point they profess to hold.

But where, on this supposition, is the boasted, and to them essential unity? Surely to speak of such a congeries of discordant elements—of churches differing in doctrine, discipline, worship, everything save the single element of episcopal government, alienated, repellant, and mutually anathematising—as the one visible kingdom of God on earth, is to say that the one Church of Christ is no more one, and that the seamless robe of Christ is rent in a hundred fragments asunder. How

can *they* be one, who practically disown all unity with one another—who have been for long centuries divorced from all, even the least semblance of mutual communion—who never meet but to close, in violent collision and deadly strife, the one with the other? There may, indeed, be conceived to be, amid all this outward diversity and discordance, a certain inward ground of unity, such as binds together even the most widely divergent sections of the evangelical Protestant body; but visible and organic unity there is none. They may be one with one another in *our sense*, but certainly not *in theirs*.

The real state of the case, then, viewed in the light of fact and experience, is surely transparent enough. The unity which these men have dreamt of, and cherished within their hearts, as a fundamental principle of their faith and life, exists not on the earth. As a fair vision of the heart, it may amuse for a while the fancy of fond enthusiasts, but amid the stern and solid realities of the actual world it has no place or standing whatever. *Nusquam apparet*;—unless, indeed, here again you are content to recognise your heart's ideal in that vast and mysterious system, which, spreading in endless ramifications throughout the world, is yet, in creed, order, discipline, worship, and communion, everywhere one, and which boldly challenges to herself the name and the prerogatives of the one only kingdom of Christ and the ark of salvation here on earth.

This argument Dr Wiseman has wrought out at great length in one of his Essays,* and we must say, so far

* Essays on Various Subjects, vol. ii. Essay vi.

as Anglicans are concerned, with overwhelming effect. We would recommend a careful perusal of that paper to any one who would see, in its full extent, the utter hopelessness of the position to which these divines have in a disastrous hour committed themselves. It derives, too, a peculiar interest, as having been, according to his own statement, the first means of raising a doubt in the mind of Dr Newman as to the tenableness of the Anglican position; nor, we are very sure, will any candid and unprejudiced reader much wonder that it should have had that effect. For ourselves, we can hardly conceive it possible that any thorough-going disciple of the Anglo-Catholic system could read and seriously weigh the argument pursued in that paper, without having his whole faith in his cherished theory shaken to the very foundation. That it had that effect on the mind of the leader and master-spirit of the movement, and that from the shock then received he never afterwards recovered, is now historically known; that a similar influence was exercised more or less on thousands of his followers, who can doubt? Indeed, it is from this period that the general unsettlement of conviction and panic-stricken feeling which, after the first years of sanguine confidence, befell this party, and which has marked all their movements, more or less, ever since, must be traced. That individual and important points in Dr Wiseman's argument may be successfully impugned, we are well aware; that in particular his testimonies drawn from the age of Augustine, in behalf of the Papal centre of unity, are in many instances greatly exaggerated or misinterpreted,

we could easily show. Still, after every reasonable drawback, the Romish controversialist remains impreguably entrenched in two positions, both equally fatal to the theory of his Tractarian antagonists:—(1.) That the idea of the visible unity, or theory of catholicity, which had in that age fully established itself in the Church, and which Augustine wields as his great engine of assault on his Donatist antagonists, included not only a uniform system of government throughout all the churches, but a state of active communion and mutual recognition between them; and (2.) That already the so-called apostolical See of Rome had begun to be looked to as the visible centre of unity, and communion with it to be employed as a practical test for deciding on the catholicity of individual churches. That these two principles, and especially the latter, were not then fully developed or universally received, is unquestionably true; still it is not the less certain that the foundations of both were in that age securely laid. Already, in the days of Augustine and Ambrose, had the doctrine of a visible universal unity, tested by actual intercommunion, grown into a system, and taken full possession of the Church's highest minds, and already had the germ, at least, if not the full-grown principle, of a visible centre, acquired a firm lodgment in the growing feelings and sentiments of the age; and those two principles, thus born together, grew with one another's growth, and strengthened with each other's strength, until both together reached their full development in that gigantic fabric of hierarchical despotism which reached its sum-

mit in the days of Innocent and Hildebrand.* It stands thus on record, not on the pages of controversy only, but on the clearest registers of impartial history, that never yet was the idea of a visible outward unity fully realised, but in connection with a visible centre of unity, and that centre the Roman See; and men of all times must make up their minds to the alternative of either resting content with that divine unity which God has given, and of which alone we have the faintest trace in the inspired Word—a unity in spirit and in truth, issuing more or less in an outward and visible harmony; or grasping at a fond ideal of our own vain hearts, which can never be realised on earth but by a blind submission to that dread power which unites all, only by destroying all, and which, with the might of a devouring vortex, sucks and draws all things into itself.

To a clear sense of this alternative many have already fully awoke; and more and more will do so as this great controversy advances towards its close.

3. We could have wished to have spoken much more at length of the subject of SACRAMENTAL POWER than our space will now permit us to do. We could, we think, easily show that here also the transition from Anglicanism to Romanism, if not perhaps so clearly demonstrable in logical sequence, is, in the whole tendency of things, as natural and inevitable as under

* See Neander's *General Church History*, vol. iii.; Hagenbach's *History of Doctrines*, vol. i.; and for a succinct statement of the leading facts and authorities, "The Rise of the Papal Power, traced in Three Lectures." By Professor Hussey. Oxford.

the two former heads. If the votary of sacramental grace cannot be so easily *reasoned* into Romanism, he may assuredly be as naturally and surely *developed* into it.

The radical distinction between the Romish and semi-Romish, and the Protestant doctrine, on the subject of the efficacy of the sacraments, may be stated briefly thus: According to the Romish view, their power is *mystical*; according to the Protestant, it is *moral* and *spiritual*. In the theory of the one, their power resides in themselves, and operates directly and inevitably as a sacred charm on the souls of the prepared recipient; in that of the other, their whole virtue depends on the blessing of God going with them, and the working of the Spirit in and by them. According to the one, they impart grace; according to the other, they are only means of grace. True, the instructed Romanist does not maintain that the sacraments effectually communicate grace altogether independent of the state of the recipients. He admits, in a certain sense, the necessity of penitence and faith, and the absence of any insuperable inward obstacle or *obex*, such as that of mortal sin, in order to their beneficial participation; still supposing all the requisite conditions present, the sacrament, simply by virtue of its administration (*ex opere operato*), will certainly and inevitably work its saving effect like a magical charm upon the soul. They stand before us like so many vessels full charged with the mysterious supernatural energy, and only require a touch, and the absence of any non-conducting medium within, that they may communicate all their life-giving power to the re-

cipient's soul. Such was the idea of sacramental power, excogitated and matured in an age when the simple and sublime spirituality of New Testament times had passed away, and when the belief in magical charms was universal in the world, and which still holds its ground as the central dogma of a vast superstition, long after the heathenish fancies which generated it had seemed to have fled for ever before the light of advancing knowledge and of scriptural truth!

We need scarcely say that this sacramental principle, thus explained, is held alike by Anglicans and by Romanists. The former, equally with the latter, glory in proclaiming their religion as intensely and pervasively sacramental, and in dwelling on this as the grand fundamental difference between their system and that of the so-called ultra-Protestant sects. With them the sacraments, and the grace therein communicated, constitute the very central spring of all practical Christianity and of the Christian life. Everything hangs upon this. Pardon, peace, spiritual life and strength, our very standing and hope before God, turns upon this one matter—the due and valid administration, and the right reception, of these “holy and tremendous mysteries.” What natural birth is to the child, and the staff of life to the man, such is the baptismal laver and the eucharistic altar in Catholic and Anglo-Catholic life. The preaching of the Word occupies an entirely different and subordinate place. It may be most useful for calling in heathens and heretics into the Church, for instructing catechumens, awakening

penitents, and preparing the faithful generally for the more profitable reception of "the mysteries;" but so far as the inner life and nourishment of the soul is concerned, the sacraments are still the all in all. Through these we are born again; through these we are renewed again unto repentance, and restored to a state of grace, on every fresh relapse from baptismal purity; through these we are nourished and built up unto eternal life.

But it may be asked, why an Anglican, holding these doctrines, and believing that he has within the Church of England, or, as he loves to call it, "the English branch of the Catholic Church," all the blessings of sacramental grace, may not remain in that Church to his life's end, and fully carry out the belief and practice of his religion within her bosom? Now that he may do this, at least to a very large extent, is but too lamentably manifest from the course followed by many for the last twenty years and up to this hour. But there are two things which must ever stand greatly in the way of such men, and render the practice of "Catholic life" within the Protestant pale but an uneasy, stunted, and half-hearted thing.

In the first place, the Catholic Anglican must always be more or less exposed to chilling scruples about the perfect security of his position. His whole religious life hangs on the validity and efficacy of the sacraments which he enjoys. If there be any flaw there, then the rock of his confidence is gone, and he is thrown adrift with others on the wide sea of uncovenanted mercy, from

which he had hoped that he had for ever escaped. But of this indispensable validity and efficacy, he can never, from the nature of the case, feel quite secure. That baptism may be valid, it must be received within the Catholic Church. That the elements on the altar may be to him really the body and blood of Christ, they must be consecrated by a duly accredited priest; and yet of neither of these things can he thoroughly satisfy himself. He *believes*, indeed, that his Church is a true branch of the one Catholic body, and that her priests are true priests of the universal Church; but at the same time he cannot but know that both these things are emphatically denied by the great body of what he considers Catholic Christendom, and that all communion and recognition is refused to himself and his Church on that very account. That such an overwhelming testimony should awaken doubts in his mind is manifestly inevitable; nor has he anything whatever to countervail it but his own private judgment and that of his brethren—that very private judgment which he has learned to shrink from with horror as a blind and delusive guide. At this point the old and well-known argument on the ground of greater security, comes in with overwhelming cogency. The validity of the Romish sacraments is admitted by all alike; the validity of the Anglican is denied by all, save only by themselves. What sane man, then, that values his everlasting security, and who believes that on the validity of those life-giving ordinances his all depends, would not unspeakably prefer a certainty to a peradventure, and unless other circum-

stances of overwhelming gravity stood in the way, seek life rather where it is assuredly to be found, than where he runs the danger of losing it for ever? To us who, with the Bible in our hand, reject this whole system of sacramentalism as totally without warrant in the Word of God, and believe "that the sacraments are made effectual means of salvation, not through any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in those who by faith receive them"—such an argument is totally inept and powerless; but to those who believe, with Anglicans, that their very salvation hangs on the canonical validity of the sacraments they receive, it never can fail to come home with a certain measure of painful force—enough, at least, to render the attainment of perfect mental repose in the practice of a sacramental religion impossible, except within the bosom of the Church of Rome.

Then, *in the second place*, there is a manifest difficulty in fully carrying out this system within the bosom of the Protestant Church. However deeply rooted it may be in the convictions and feeling of its disciples, and however anxiously they may cherish the frail exotic in themselves and in one another, the whole circumstances are unfavourable to its free and healthy growth. The soil is uncongenial, and the climate unfriendly. It is and must ever be *in* the Church, but not *of* it; the Shibboleth of a party, not the faith of a people. It can exist only in more or less perfection as a hothouse delicacy to gratify the taste of the few, not the stable

and substantial food of the many. While sacramental grace and power is with these men the all in all of religion, they cannot conceal from themselves, that if held at all in their sense, it occupies an entirely other place, both in the system of their Church, and in the convictions of the great body of her members. This cannot but make them very uneasy. They must feel themselves to be members of a Church which has not only in a great measure lost hold of the very essence of Christianity, but seems, in its whole constitution, traditional sentiments, and prevailing spirit, uncongenial with it. Do what they will, the fact stares them in the face, that the religion of the Church of England is *not* in their sense sacramental, and that all their own unceasing labours of twenty or thirty years have entirely failed to make it so. The element which they deem the very essence of its life, it has barely tolerated within its pale, or rather, from a certain feebleness of constitution, has simply failed in violently throwing out of its system. Hence inevitable and endless misgivings as to the thorough rectitude of their position—the ever-recurring feeling that they are not at home, and that their right place is in another clime. Besides, not only is there a difficulty in fully acting out their sacramental system, but the *very machinery for it* within the English Church is incomplete. Where sacramental power is made the one grand channel of grace, it would seem nothing more than fitting and necessary that the system should be so constructed as to meet all the turnings and windings of the Christian life—that for every

great exigency in our earthly course, there should be a great and special sacrament of grace.

It may, of course, be said, that the two great sacraments recognised by the Church of England are such as, if rightly used, effectually to provide for every case; but certainly, to say the least, the superior number of the Roman rites, and the manner in which they fit into all the great and critical moments in the life of man, gives them, upon the sacramental theory, a great advantage. The life of a Roman Catholic is really and throughout intensely sacramental. He moves in this element, and breathes this air from first to last. They are the wells of which he drinks by the way, the successive station-houses in which he rests and is furnished for his onward journey. In Baptism, he is born; in Confirmation, he is established in grace; in Penance, he is restored and renewed in strength day by day; in the Eucharist, he is fed; in Orders, if he enters on the sacred office, he is baptized with heavenly unction and gifted with all ghostly power and grace; in Matrimony, if he prefer the ordinary path of life, he is enriched with all conjugal and domestic blessings; and then at last, when the sands of life are running out, and the dread moment of dissolution draws near, he receives his last Communion as his viaticum for the untrodden way before him. And now, to use the words of one better acquainted with these things than we, "from that moment our tender mother redoubles her solicitude, and enlarges her bounty, bringing forth from her stores fresh blessings for every hour and

its new wants and trials. That healing, and soothing, and bracing unction which comes so seasonably to strengthen the Christian athlete in his final conflict; that sublime commendation of the parting spirit into the hands of God and His angels, wherein the Church on earth seems to bear the soul committed to its care to the very threshold of the eternal gates, and there, with equal solemnity, met by its triumphant brotherhood, deliver it over to their safer watchfulness; that last blessing wherein the Church of God should seem to give her expiring son the final pledge of her indulgent pardon, to imprint upon his brow the seal of recognition, in her last parental kiss, and to receive this back upon the image of Christ crucified, which is pressed to his lips. These are advantages for which one has a right to ask, where are the equivalents in that Church which sets up a claim to be our mother, and to have our allegiance and our love?" Nor is this all. Even to the grave, and beyond it, the Church follows her children, and succours them with the might of sacramental grace:—

"Let us be laid in our shroud with that cross at which evil spirits tremble grasped in our hands; let the poor brethren of some pious guild bear us, with psalms of penance mournfully sung as for a brother, to our common place of rest—'the holy field,' consecrated by most solemn rites; let the standard of Christ be borne before us, as the emblem of victory over the grave; let the Church recite over us her touching prayers for our deliverance and rest; and the very earth which, sprinkled with blessed water, falls heavy upon our coffin, shall seem rich with her benedictions, embalming our remains beyond Egypt's skill for a glorious resurrection."*

Verily this is sacramentalism in deed and in truth—

* Dr Wiseman's *Essays*, vol. ii. pp. 337, 338.

sacramentalism genuine and intense, livingly realised and practically carried out—sacramentalism, with which no imitation yet produced on Anglican ground can, in the eye of a true votary, admit of being for an instant compared. By all means, if we are to be saved by sacraments, let us throw ourselves on them wholly, and live in their element continually. The greater their number, and the more entirely they meet our every exigency of life, the better.

True, indeed, to a man who has really felt the burden of sin, and the healing power of the living Word, miserable comforters will they be all. Better to him one single sentence from the lips of his Lord than a thousand such appliances of untempered mortar. Rooted and built up on the true foundation, he needs no such feeble buttresses of wood, hay, and stubble to sustain his hope. “That healing, and soothing, and bracing unction which comes so seasonably to strengthen the Christian athlete in his final conflict”!—how infinitely better one single whispered word of the blessed God at such a moment!—“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” “The Church on earth bearing the soul committed to its care to the very threshold of the eternal gates”!—were not this better, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee;” “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for THOU art with me”? Drops of “blessed water, falling heavy upon our coffin, embalming our remains for a

glorious resurrection"! Oh! away with such sentimental drivelling in presence of the dread realities of death and the grave, and let me rather grasp that promise of my Lord as my only anointing for the burying—"I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in ME, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Still, if sacramental charms be the great source of saving grace, and not the living God speaking directly to the sinner's soul by His own Word, and applying the signs and seals of His covenant spiritually to their consciences and hearts, that assuredly is the way effectually to apply them. Such mere playing at sacramentalism as the Anglican divines have attained to—such mere flourishing in men's eyes of "the golden keys" of ghostly power, which they scarce ever use—may amuse the sentimental votary, but can never either satisfy the understanding or fill the hearts of earnest men. Such an amphibious and half-and-half life can only, to clear and thorough-going minds at least, be a state of transition. Those who have tasted the genuine fruits of living sacramentalism, where it grows in its own native clime, will scarcely care to seek it again in the cold seats of its mere artificial and scanty culture.

Thus we have, we trust, sufficiently shown that there is in reality not enable middle ground between the principles of Protestantism and the principles of Romanism. We must take our choice between the religion of the Bible on the one hand, and the religion of the Church on the other. The Bible, the one test of truth,

in opposition to a dogmatic infallibility; the Bible, the one bond of spiritual unity, in opposition to the binding force of an external visible centre; the Bible, "the power of God unto salvation," in opposition to a system of sacramental charms; the Bible, in the hands of the Spirit, in opposition to the Church in the hands of the priest,—such are the only two real alternatives, and on one or other we must take our stand. Every theory which attempts to establish a middle ground between them, will prove on trial a mere sham and make-believe—existing only on paper, and incapable of being carried out in practice—only so many slippery positions on the inclined plane that leads from the firm rock of truth to the rank and treacherous swamps of error.

We have felt it painful to have been obliged in this controversy even to seem to take the part of our common adversary against those with whom, amid all their aberrations, we may be supposed to entertain a far greater sympathy; but we had no alternative. It has been our unwelcome lot to witness this forlorn division of the professedly Protestant host, madly leaving the entrenched and impregnable camp of their brethren in arms, and, in sheer infatuation, and heedless of all warnings, marching full within the lines of the enemy, loudly proclaiming the while that theirs was the only true position, at once for effective assault and secure defence. What other result could possibly be expected in such circumstances than that they should be ignominiously routed, and either cut to pieces or carried as helpless captives to the camp of the enemy. We beheld

the ill-starred movement; we foresaw its consequences; we proclaimed the danger; but all in vain. "No position like ours," they cried, "for effectually assaulting Popery, and repelling the common enemy;" and so they rushed blindly on. That the consequences anticipated by every intelligent Protestant have actually happened, we need scarcely say. The battle between them and their Romanist antagonists is really at an end. Confidently as they rushed on to the assault, they staggered and recoiled in the encounter, retired from position to position, till their ranks were thoroughly broken, and the rout became complete. Single points of importance they may have held good—as the novelty of this or that ceremony, or of this or that assumption of Papal tyranny; but meanwhile their main battle gave way before the heavy onslaught of the enemy, and their ranks were scattered beyond the possibility of rallying. Their very leader, whose voice hitherto had been to them as a trumpet-blast, capitulated, and delivered himself up bound and handcuffed to the enemy. Many more of every degree followed the ignominious example. Since then they have borne all the aspect of a broken and discomfited host. Never appearing in the open field, they have maintained a mere desultory and guerilla warfare. Bereft of heart and hope, they have ceased from all aggressive demonstrations, and confined themselves to a system of irresolute and feeble defensive operations. They who, erewhile, flushed with hope and early success, boldly hurled forth their defiance to all the world, claimed broad England as indefeasibly their

own, and summoned Romanists and Dissenters alike to surrender to their claims, are now content to exist on sufferance, and stand on their defence. Instead of calling upon their old antagonists to come out from the apostasy, and seek a sounder faith and purer worship within their mother Church of England, they are only solicitous to prove that they themselves may feel secure within her pale, and are but too glad to leave others alone where they are. Their toilsome demonstrations are directed now to show, not that Romanists should come over to them, but that they themselves may have some plausible case for not going over to Rome; while, ever and anon, one and another of their younger and more earnest followers are cutting the knot, and shaking themselves free from their perplexities, by throwing themselves into the arms of that system, in which, by the confession of both parties alike, they are safe.

Such is the inglorious issue of that once triumphant movement which was to revive in England all the glories of the Nicene age, to realise all the grandeur of the Roman system without its corruptions, and absorb all the various forms of dissent into itself!

There are many thoughts of a practical kind which the subject may well awaken, and which, did our space permit, we would willingly pursue at length. In particular, it is surely worthy of most anxious consideration how we may best contribute to reinvigorate and conserve those great Protestant principles which are so fearfully imperilled by the movement we have been contemplating. How to arrest the progress of an evil so widespreading

and so formidable—an evil which not only in a general way tends towards, but directly and inevitably, and just in proportion as it exists, works the ruin of whatever is sacred and precious in Protestant truth, is a question which may well occupy the deepest thoughts of our highest minds. The disease is before us, manifesting itself indeed no longer by such open and portentous signs as some years ago, but working insidiously, and perhaps not the less fatally, in secret. Where, then, is the remedy? Before indicating our reply to this question, let us endeavour to make a more exact *diagnosis* of the malady itself, as it manifests itself in some of the chief classes of those in the sister kingdom who have been infected with it.

While an extreme and hurtful ecclesiasticism characterises all the adherents of this movement, and constitutes the radical principle of all their aberrations, this general tendency exhibits itself under various special phases, according to the particular bias of character of those who have imbibed it. Thus, *first of all*, we have what may be distinguished as the *ascetico-devotional* class. Of this section, Dr Pusey himself may be taken as a characteristic example. Serious, earnest, thoughtful, smitten with a sense of sin, without apparently having fully tasted the peace of the gospel, and so rather painfully seeking than having joyfully found the hidden treasure, they have aimed at a deeper, severer, more self-mortifying form of piety than was prevalent in their day. Clothing themselves with sack-cloth, and eating ashes like bread, they have striven

hard after the sacrifices of a broken heart, while the "joy of God's salvation" has been little known. The "*Dies iræ, dies illa*" has been the keynote of their strain; and although its cheering "*quem tu salvas, salvas gratis*" has not, we trust, been entirely hid from them, yet, like a faint star, it has shone on them but feebly and unsteadily. They have given themselves to prayer, fasting, confession, severe self-discipline, and daily sacrifices of praise. They have sympathised rather with Luther weeping in his convent cell, than when, filled with the great light that had burst upon him, he pealed forth his glad *Eureka* to the world. We are disposed to speak of these men tenderly. If there is much in them to condemn, there is much also from which we may all most profitably learn. In a superficial age, when multitudes are disposed to take everything for granted, so far as spiritual religion is concerned, the spectacle of souls struggling earnestly, though in a mistaken way, after inward purity, may be much better used as a lesson and a warning than as a mark for scorn. May not this perilous tendency be in a great measure traced to a reaction from the feeble and frothy character of much of our own current evangelism, awakening in fervent but imperfectly-enlightened minds a feeling of indignant revulsion from what seemed to them effete and powerless, and a longing for something deeper and more real in the life of God in the soul?

A *second* class, some of them perhaps partaking largely of the element already described, but standing

out by certain distinct characteristics of their own, are what we would call the *speculative-ideal* school. If Dr Pusey serve as the representative of the former class, Dr Newman is as decidedly the characteristic type of this. Mainly at one with his distinguished compeer on most points, and working with him hand-in-hand in the same great enterprise for years, he yet differed from him in this—that while the Regius Professor occupied himself almost solely with special doctrines and practices which both wished to see restored, *he* was from the first the votary of an idea. The one yearned after the revival of confession, fasting, frequent communion, inward discipline, and the like; the latter panted after the resurrection of the Church. Of an imaginative temperament, and constructive genius, the system never appeared to him as a mere set of forgotten truths and neglected observances, the revival of which was much to be wished; but as one great whole which was to be realised in living presence and mighty power upon the earth. A grand ideal lived within him, and fascinated him. The majestic image of a visible unearthly kingdom in the world, but not of it; everywhere spread, yet everywhere one, and radiant in the varied graces of unity, sanctity, universality, perpetuity; the mother of martyrs, the home of saints, the refuge of penitents, the depositary of truth, the treasure-house of grace;—such was throughout the object of his fond idolatry and eager search. If he find it not here, he must seek it elsewhere; nor can he rest until he feels, or at least most strongly believes, that it is found. To use the masterly

portraiture of one whose too early removal from the scene of this and every other strife we cannot but deeply deplore :—

“His imagination and feelings were irreparably engaged, and reason as usual was soon busily active in devising subtle argumentative grounds to justify his choice. He had before his fancy a bright idea of unity, perpetuity, holiness, self-denial, majesty,—in short, that ‘glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,’ which the Lord of the whole Church is yet to ‘present to Himself,’ holy and without blemish. In the impatience of desire, he had come to identify his ideal with the actual Church of history ; by constantly dwelling among the highly-wrought devotional works of holy men in the Roman communion—works which utterly spoil the taste for the calmer and more intellectual piety of our divines (very much as romances debauch the taste for solid reading)—his heart was seduced into forgetting the vices of thousands, in the heroic virtues of comparatively few, and (what is much worse) the gross doctrinal errors of those few for the sake of the ardent piety their effusions seemed to embody ; until at length the errors became tolerable, became acceptable, became welcome, were received as truths ; and then the work was accomplished.”*

That his actual course has not been very different from this may be gathered from his own graphic words given above, in that we need not doubt that he only imputes to his brethren what he had but too deeply experienced himself. That the fond dream should have met the rough awaking which he describes in the Church of England, with its many real defects and glaring anomalies and abuses, and to an Anglican eye utter baldness and nakedness, no one will wonder ; but that

* Letters on the Development of Christian Doctrine, in reply to Mr Newman’s Essay. By the Rev. William Archer Butler, M.A., late Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Dublin. Dublin: Hodges and Smith. See pp. 33, 34.

he should have found, or dreamed that he had found, the realisation of his ideal in the bloated and blood-stained form of Papal Rome, may be hard to conceive. It is indeed a mystery, and may find its full explanation only in causes that lie too deep for our philosophy.

Our foregoing argument, however, affords abundant reasons to explain why he should have been strongly moved to look in that direction; though we can easily see why, if his ideal was ever to be realised on earth, he could look in no other. Here, at least, if he can throw every other consideration into the shade, is something solid, vast, imposing, before which to bow one's self, and which he could gild and glorify at will, and invest with all the drapery of an ardent and gorgeous fancy. At all events, he is there—there in professed and apparently real content—with what secret misgivings and unconfessed desolateness of heart, it is not for us to tell.

The *third* and the last class which we shall mention, is one which must be abundantly familiar to all who have even superficially watched the progress of this movement—we mean the *æsthetico-sentimental* admirers of Tractarian doctrines and practices. This class includes a very large and miscellaneous body, from the most refined and intellectual worshippers of architecture, poetry, music, sculpture, and painting, to the mere drivelling admirers of priestly vestments, rood-screens, and stained glass. As a body, they are caught rather by the eye and the ear than by any deep questions of doctrine or the inward life. They are those who, according to the superb invective of Mr

Ruskin, are "lured into the Romanist Church by the glitter of it, like larks into a trap by broken glass; blown into a change of religion by the whine of an organ pipe; stitched into a new creed by gold threads on priest's petticoats; jangled into a change of conscience by the chimes of a belfry." To this class, we fear we must refer the enthusiastic authoress of "From Oxford to Rome," who, from the sketch of her own life history she has herself given us, would seem to have been fascinated towards the enchanted ground mainly by considerations of this kind; and who, we believe, driven by contrary gusts of sentimental feeling, has already more than once crossed and recrossed the border line that separates "the glorious land of saints and angels" * from the homely ground of the Bible and the gospel. We are afraid the persons of whom we speak constitute a very large class, mustering particularly strong in the saloons of aristocratic fashion, among the minions of a sickly and overwrought civilisation. It is essentially a Belgravian sect, and has its rallying-point somewhere about St Paul's, Wilton Place. If any one doubts the existence of such a feeble generation on the soil of sturdy old England, let him ponder the following words of Mr Pugin, written, no doubt, with the view of being read, and under the idea that there did exist among the English public a class capable of drinking them in:—

"Those who have lived in want and privation (to wit, the mem-

* Newman's Lectures to Anglicans.

blessings of plenty ; thus to those who have been devout and sincere members of the separated portion of the English Church, who have prayed, and hoped, and loved, through all the poverty of the maimed rights which it has retained—to them does the realisation of all their longing desires appear truly ravishing. . . . Oh, then, what delight ! what joy unspeakable ! when one of the solemn pile-beds of Protestant Churches) are the best qualified to appreciate the is presented to them in all its pristine life and glory. The stoups are filled to the brim, the rood is raised on high, the screen glows with sacred imagery and rich device, the niches are filled, the altar is replaced, sustained by sculptured shafts, the relics of the saints repose beneath, the body of our Lord is enshrined in its sculptured stone, the lamps of the sanctuary burn bright, the saintly portraits in the glass windows shine all gloriously, and the albs hang in the oaken aubries, and the cope-chests are filled with orphreys, bandekins, and pix and pax and chrismatory are there, and thimble, and cross.” *

Such are the chief groups into which the great army of modern ecclesiasticism naturally divides itself. Others there are more or less distinctly marked by special characteristics, particularly a vast loose multitude of mere *political High-Churchmen*, who during the heyday of its success patronised the movement, but during the late years of rebuke and disaster have been more and more holding aloof. At the first look of the matter they could not but be disposed to hail a movement which promised to strengthen the foundations of the Church, and to deal a new and crushing blow to the hated dissent. It was pleasant to them to hear, from what they deemed the holiest men of the Church, that their position, as churchmen, was as safe for eternity as it was undoubtedly comfortable for time ; and that there was as much sanctity as there was dignity in episcopal mitres

* Quoted by Mr Ruskin in “*Stones of Venice*,” vol. i. pp. 370-74.

and lawn-sleeves. But by and by things began to look more serious, and the camp waxed too hot for them. The vessel in which they had promised themselves a triumphant voyage begins to pitch and heave ominously, some of their best officers are washed overboard, and there are cries of rocks ahead; and so they are fain to make their escape to *terra firma* as best they may, and return to their old, safe, easy-going, High-Church ways.

The remedy for all these evils might admit of large discourse, but may be indicated in a very few sentences. The whole may be summed up in a single word—the BIBLE,—the renovating, purifying, transforming energy of the living Word. We close where we began. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants. That which formed the creative principle of the Church of England must also be its sustaining principle. That which was at the beginning the source of its life, must in all after-times be the spring of fresh renovation and of increasing strength. This is the very palladium of Protestant England—the pith and marrow of whatever is sound, and strong, and holy in its constitution, alike in Church and State. Here are the charmed locks wherein her great strength lies, the secret of that hidden might which has made her name great over the whole world; let her be shorn of this, and she will be weak as other lands, and fall, as other noble realms have done before her, a blind and helpless captive, into the Philistine's hands. To all the forms of ecclesiasticism alike—

ascetic, idealistic, æsthetic, hierarchic—this is the true and alone effectual antagonist. The free spirit of a living Bible Christianity must supplant, and by supplanting expel, the slavish spirit of an ascetic and cloistral devotion; a cordial submission of mind and conscience to the testimony of God, and a firm grasp laid on its mighty, soul-filling realities, will put to flight the airy dreams of the speculative idealist; and the sober, serious, masculine tone, at once rational and fervent, which is generated within the heart of every Bible-reading and Bible-loving people, will prove the best corrective for all the follies of a feeble, sentimental pietism. Thus biblicism will exorcise and drive out ecclesiasticism, in its every form, and all the world over. This is the grand panacea for all the ills of the body ecclesiastical at this present hour. In an age when the minds of men are uneasily oscillating between two extremes, equally perilous—between the licence of the individual reason or “Christian consciousness,” on the one hand, and the blind submission to an authority on the other—there is no salvation for us but in cleaving faster than ever to the eternal rock of the Word.

THE END.



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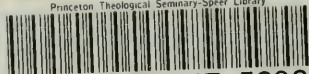
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